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John the Baptist.



**SI QUIS PENITUS POSSET INTROSPICERE AFFLATUS  
PROPHETÆ, VIDERET IN SINGULIS VERBIS CAMINOS  
IGNIS ET VEHEMENTISSIMOS ARDORES ESSE.**

*Luther.*



# JOHN THE BAPTIST.

*THE CONGREGATIONAL UNION LECTURE  
FOR 1874.*

BY

HENRY ROBERT REYNOLDS, D.D.

"AMONG THEM THAT ARE BORN OF WOMEN THERE HATH NOT RISEN A GREATER THAN JOHN THE BAPTIST: NOTWITHSTANDING HE THAT IS LEAST IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS GREATER THAN HE."—*St. Matthew.*



London:  
HODDER AND STOUGHTON,  
PATERNOSTER ROW.

1874.

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100. 9. 211.



*Ἐγένετο ἄνθρωπος ἀπεσταλμένος παρὰ  
Θεοῦ, ὄνομα αὐτῷ Ἰωάννης. οὗτος ἦλθεν  
εἰς μαρτυρίαν, ἵνα μαρτυρήσῃ περὶ τοῦ  
φωτὸς, ἵνα πάντες πιστεύσωσι δι' αὐτοῦ.*

ST. JOHN.

Agnum monstrat in aperto,  
Vox clamantis in deserto,  
Vox Verbi prænuncia.  
Ardens fide, verbo lucens,  
Et ad veram lucem ducens,  
Multa docet millia.  
Non lux iste, sed lucerna,  
Christus vero lux æterna  
Lux illustrans omnia.

ADAM OF ST. VICTOR.

Mele e locuste furon le vivande  
Che nudriro 'l Battista nel deserto ;  
Per ch' egli è glorioso e tanto grande  
Quanto per l' Evangelio v' è aperto.

DIVINA COMMEDIA. PURGATORIO xxii.

Where is the lore the Baptist taught,  
The soul unswerving and the fearless tongue ?  
The much-enduring wisdom, sought  
By lonely prayer the haunted rocks among?  
Who counts it gain his light should wane,  
So the whole world to Jesus throng.

CHRISTIAN YEAR.



## PREFACE.

---

**W**HEN I was honoured by the request of the committee of the Congregational Union of England and Wales to prepare a treatise which might, by their favour, be placed in the well-known series of works entitled "Congregational Lectures," that request was coupled, on the part of the committee, with a considerate recognition of the probability that the public delivery of the lectures would have, in my case, to be foregone.

I have now to state that the "Congregational Lecture" here offered to the public has not been delivered to a larger audience than a select class of students in a theological college. This may account for some peculiarities of treatment.

My choice of theme was in part determined by observing the comparatively small space in biblical literature which has been devoted to the mission of John the Baptist. This has seemed to me remarkable, considering the unique position occupied by him in the history and order of Divine revelation.

Modern speculation has compelled us to ask with deep seriousness—Whether the Lord Jesus Christ was



a development of humanity or a manifestation of God to the human race?—whether He was the natural outcome of a previously existing combination of circumstances and institutions, or whether human nature was Divinely reconstituted in Him? Was the Old Covenant merely reformed, or, on the other hand, was a New Covenant made with humanity in His blood? The answer to these questions turns in part upon the character of the prophet who was ordained to be “the clasp of the two covenants.” Moreover, John was not simply a Hebrew prophet: he was an Eastern sage, and his affinities with Oriental speculation provoke much inquiry, and demand close investigation. As he heralded the Hope of the world, as well as the advent of Messiah, the *VOX CLAMANTIS* is charged with a message to every generation. His personal relations with Jesus have brought his form into a dazzling, and perhaps confusing light, but they have also conferred peculiar value upon the indubitably historic position conceded to him. The great words attributed to John demand special exegetical treatment. His life, his death, and the prolongation of his influence, in various forms of theological speculation and ecclesiastical usage, even to the present day, are enhanced in importance by the circumstance that our Lord bore especial testimony to John, claimed him as His forerunner, adopted his method, endorsed his baptism and his teaching, and yet at the same time declared that “he that was least in the kingdom of heaven was greater than he.”

The institutions, ideas, and tendencies of both Hebraism and Christianity must of necessity be intersected at many points by any endeavour to sketch the



relations of John the Baptist with the kingdom of God. An adequate account of the offices he filled, of the teaching attributed to him, and of the definite work said to have been done by him, cannot fail to become, to some extent, an introduction to the LIFE OF CHRIST; and, moreover, such a sketch involves the discussion of so many questions of interest to theologians, as almost to expand into a *cursus theologicus*. The prime difficulty of my task has consisted in the selection of those topics which were essential to my plan.

I have especially desired to exhibit the judgment pronounced in the life, person, and work of John upon some of the main features of the Old Covenant, and to discover some canons of criticism by which the transitory elements of Hebraism may be discriminated from those which are of perpetual significance. This inquiry has not failed to suggest the delicate task of discriminating between the more and the less essential elements of Christianity itself. It is scarcely necessary to say that these studies have led to deeper confidence in the reality of the kingdom of God, to a profounder belief in the supernatural character of the revelation of God in holy Scripture, to a more overpowering sense of the claims of the Lord Jesus Christ on our loyalty, our trust, our worship. I have written for those who sympathize in these convictions. It would have been congenial to my deepest personal feeling to have fled the "loud stunning tide" of controversy, and to have sat at the feet of this great saint, simply to learn some of the deep lessons which he has to teach in this nineteenth century as well as in the first; some of the lovely and lofty things touching



the Divine life which might be gathered from his vigorous conscience, his ascetic self-repression, his prophetic insight, his tremendous expectation, his mighty deeds, his bravery, his testimonies, his doubts, and his martyrdom.

Sympathizing in the strenuous desire of John to realize the lofty ideal of holiness, to extirpate the seeds of evil, to commune with the LIVING GOD, it would have been a welcome task to have dwelt long and patiently on his personal and moral greatness, to have accepted his spiritual mission, and have yielded to the severe discipline by which he would prepare in our modern world a way for the Lord; to have offered the prayer which Bishop Jeremy Taylor has left on record.

“O holy and most glorious God, who, before the publication of Thy eternal Son, the Prince of Peace, didst send Thy servant, John Baptist, by the examples of mortification, and the rude austerities of a penitential life, and by the sermons of penance, to remove all the impediments of sin, that the ways of his Lord and ours might be made clear, ready, and expedite; be pleased to let Thy Holy Spirit lead me in the straight paths of sanctity, without deflections to either hand, and without the interruption of deadly sin; that I may, with facility, zeal, assiduity, and a persevering diligence, walk in the ways of the Lord. Be pleased that the axe may be laid to the root of sin, that the whole body of it may be cut down in me; that no fruit of Sodom may grow up to Thy displeasure. Thoroughly purge the floor and granary of my heart with Thy fan, with the breath of Thy diviner Spirit, that it may be a holy repository of graces, and full of benediction and sanctity; that when our Lord shall come,



I may at all times be prepared for the entertainment of so divine a Guest, apt to lodge Him and to feast Him, that He may for ever delight to dwell with me. And make me also to dwell with Him, sometimes retiring into His recesses and private rooms, by contemplation, and admiring of His beauties, and beholding the secrets of His kingdom; and at all other times walking in the courts of the Lord's house, by the diligences and labours of repentance and a holy life, till Thou shalt please to call me to a nearer communication of Thy excellences; which then grant, when, by Thy gracious assistances, I shall have done Thy works, and glorified Thy holy name, by the strict and never-failing purposes and proportionable endeavours of religion and holiness, through the merits and mercies of Jesus Christ. Amen."<sup>1</sup>

My theme has, however, thrown me into the skirts of the great storm which is thundering over every idea and institution of Christendom. There are mighty currents of thought which compel us to handle our craft with circumspection, to put a reef into some sails, and to protect ourselves against new, and at one time un contemplated dangers.

The possibility of "supernatural religion" is now in debate. Nay, the personality of God and the immortality of man are brought, in scientific congresses, into open discussion. The credibility of any document that implies a miraculous element is boldly disputed. The historical student is encouraged to doubt the accuracy of every statement that has been made in any ancient document whatever, and to test the trustworthiness of an authority by the inherent probability of the facts it

<sup>1</sup> Bishop Taylor, *Life of Christ*. Works, Ed. by Heber, vol. ii. p. 158.



may record. He is warned against any hypothesis which might have the effect of confirming the truth of a biblical narrative, lest he should exhibit a theologic bias and an ignorance of the spirit of true historic criticism. On the other hand, the invention or imagination of a purely hypothetical author of one of the histories or letters of the New Testament, and the discovery of a nucleus of antique matter embedded in the pages of some well-known history, are not visited with very harsh condemnation. On the contrary, so delicate are the senses of the literary critic, and so fine is his tact, that he assumes the power of dogmatically determining the extent to which the hypothetical nucleus—say of the book of Leviticus or the Gospel of Luke—has been tampered with by its unknown author. Criticism even goes so far as to profess a knowledge of what was actually a part of the original nucleus, but has been left out of it by the editor of the composite document.

These powers, if genuine, are very wonderful; more so, we submit, than the miracles of Scripture; and it must be allowed that they have been freely applied to the Zendavesta as well as to the Pentateuch, to the Koran as well as to the Gospel, to the poems of Homer as well as to the Psalms, to Plato and Shakespeare as well as to St. Paul. I wish to render all honour to the honesty of purpose, as well as to the vast learning, to the amazing ingenuity, and to the candour with which many scholars—the latchet of whose shoes I am unworthy to loose—have applied their principles of speculative reconstruction to the documents of our holy faith. At the same time, I have been unable to see the justice of the theory which eliminates all honesty and value from the authorship of the four Gospels. I



cannot understand why an hypothesis which tends to solve an historic difficulty, and to save the credit both of a document and of its author, is necessarily and *primâ facie* untrustworthy and prejudiced,—while an hypothesis which charges inadvertence, ignorance, partisanship, or gross miscarriage upon (say) the author of the fourth Gospel, indicates breadth of thought and fine critical acumen.

As every step of my inquiry has been beset by speculations and hypotheses which are inconsistent with the simple truth of the evangelic narrative, I have felt compelled to adopt, somewhat reluctantly, an apologetic tone. I have not dared to close my eyes to the variously-conducted attack upon the sources of our evangelic history.

While not presuming formally to handle this many-sided question, I have ventured to think that a discussion of some of the problems which the life of John the Baptist presents, though they do not carry the solution of questions of far greater moment, yet can hardly be decided in either direction without instituting a precedent that will apply with force to a still grander theme. To take one illustration. If the synoptic and Johannine portraitures of the Baptist can be shown to be mutually consistent, it appears to me that one of the gravest difficulties besetting an admission of the authenticity of the fourth Gospel is removed. It would have been clearly superfluous for me to have given in this work even a *résumé* of the great controversy on this subject. If I have appeared to treat the authorship of the fourth Gospel as an open question, it has been because I have felt that the progress of my argument has a legitimate tendency to establish its authen-



ticity. The use of the *term* "fourth Gospel" has been dictated by an obvious convenience.

The specific treatises on John the Baptist are few in number. The Bampton Lecture for 1783, by Robert Holmes, the brief treatises of Witsius, Van Rohde, J. G. Ernst, Hartwell Horne, and Huxtable, Sermons of Nicholas of Clairvaux and E. Irving, and the articles in Winer's *Realwörterbuch*, Herzog's *Encyclopädie*, Tillemont's *Mémoires*, the *Acta Sanctorum* of the Bollandists, and in the recent Dictionaries of the Bible, so far as I have been able to discover, complete the list. The biblical commentaries, however, and the "Lives of Christ" which have dealt more or less completely with the career of the Baptist, are very numerous. Augustine, Chrysostom, Bonaventura, and Jeremy Taylor, Sepp and Strauss, Schleiermacher, Mill, Milman, Stier, Hausrath, Schneckenburger, Hase, Neander, Schenkel, De Wette, Meyer, Da Costa, and Alford, Renan, Ewald, Lange, Langen, Davidson, De Pressensé, Keim, Beecher, Farrar, and many others, have been consulted. I profess no first-hand acquaintance with the Talmudical literature, and have been thankful to avail myself of the labours in this department of Lightfoot, Schöttgen, Danzius, Eisenmenger, Gfrörer, Jost, Grätz, Ginsberg, and Etheridge. In references to those works either of patristic or foreign theology and history that have been translated into English, I have quoted for the most part from the translations that are easily accessible.

Not until these pages had nearly passed through the press, have I had the opportunity of reading the anonymous work entitled "Supernatural Religion." My main argument is untouched by this treatise.



Profound belief in a personal God, in "One who thinks and loves," appears to me, both in logic and history, anterior to the reception of any "revelation" by miraculous interposition. The sphere of the supernatural is much wider than that which this writer contests. Life, mind, history, and the evolution of thought have offered supernatural phenomena to our faith. We need no miracle, properly so called, to convince us that the twenty-third Psalm and that the parable of the Prodigal Son came from the source of all beauty, righteousness, and love. If I had previously read this learned author's examination of the *external* evidence of the authenticity of the four Gospels, I should have spoken in different terms of the present state of the controversy. But if Marcion's Gospel were demonstrated to be independent of Luke's, this conclusion would not disprove the *integrity* of the third Gospel. If the existence of an ancient document at any particular date is dependent on the extent or accuracy of presumed "quotations" from it, I fear it would be difficult to prove the existence of the Septuagint in the second century, and the genuineness of all ancient literature would rest on the most insecure foundation.

Many questions which, to some minds, may appear to be closely connected with the ministry of John, I have avoided. It did not seem to me that I was called upon to discuss the nature, the mode, or the subjects of Christian baptism, or to advance beyond the prior question of the validity and essential character of baptism as a Christian ordinance. The "Baptism of John" has certain interesting relations with each of these great controversies. I have endeavoured to



indicate the inferences that may be drawn from the historic origination and symbolic significance of water-baptism.

In the concluding lecture, on the Results, Echoes, and Lessons of the Ministry of John, I have stated at greater length some of the conclusions that may be derived from the whole discussion.

It is with extreme diffidence that I offer to the Church of Christ, to the honoured brethren who have encouraged me to undertake the task, and to the beloved students of my theological class who listened to an abridged form of these prelections—these imperfect results of my very limited studies on this subject. My one desire is that they may aid some in their interpretation and exposition of God's Word, and may quicken in many hearts the yearning for that baptism of the Holy Spirit of which the baptism of John was the expressive prelibation.

It is a pleasure and duty gratefully to acknowledge the valuable help I have derived from the Rev. J. Radford Thomson, M.A., who has kindly assisted the passage of the work through the press.

H. R. REYNOLDS.

CHESHUNT COLLEGE,

*November, 1874.*



## ADVERTISEMENT

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18, SOUTH STREET, FINSBURY,  
*January, 1874.*







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John, than which man a sadder or a greater  
Not till this day has been of woman born ;  
John, like some iron peak by the Creator  
Fired with the red glow of the rushing morn.

This, when the sun shall rise and overcome it,  
Stands in his shining desolate and bare,  
Yet not the less the inexorable summit  
Flamed him his signal to the happier air.

FREDERICK W. H. MYERS.

The last and greatest herald of heaven's King,  
Girt with rough skins, hies to the desert wild ;  
Among that savage brood the woods forth bring,  
Which he more harmless found than man, and mild.  
His food was locusts and what there doth spring,  
With honey that from virgin hives distill'd,  
Parch'd body, hollow eyes, some uncouth thing,  
Made him appear, long since from earth exiled.

W. DRUMMOND OF HAWTHORNDEN.



## LECTURE I.

*THE SIGNIFICANCE AND SOURCES OF THE  
BIOGRAPHY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST.*







## LECTURE I.

### THE SIGNIFICANCE AND SOURCES OF THE BIOGRAPHY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST.

#### § 1. *Great Men and their Antecedents.*

THEOLOGICIANS are assured by certain expositors of physical science that the universe, at every moment of its history, contains within itself all that is necessary to account for the next moment of its complicated being. The scientific spirit shrinks from the hypothesis of newly-created energy, endeavours to bridge over all chasms by a conjectural evolution, and to discover the law of every observed anomaly. We are continually told that there are no isolated facts, no absolute commencements, no creative renewals, no Divine interpositions in the universe. It is not my intention, nor does it come within my province, to dispute this widely admitted canon in the realm of physical science. The doctrine of development need not, if accepted, deprive the theist of his God ; indeed, the whole hypothesis will force the devout mind into continual fellowship with the sleepless, boundless, transcendent Intelligence, which has been evolving in the abysses of eternity the conditions of every molecule, and which presides over the law and measure of every wavelet of the universal energy.

Whatever be the final conclusion of science with



respect to the origin of species, or the mode in which the first human spirit clothed itself in the dust of the earth, it is more than probable that the intellect and will of man, the conscience and emotions of the human race, the evolution of humanity as a whole, will yet for ages refuse to come under the domain of cognizable law. The destiny of the human race has at certain moments been entrusted to the feeblest material, has been suspended by the strength of a thread over a chaotic abyss; while the self-will, the caprice, the speculations, and audacity of individual men, have affected for good or evil all subsequent generations.

There is considerable danger in the modern resolve to solve all the mysteries of greatness by tracing all the antecedents of great men. The physical causes of genius, the external provocatives of inspiration, the hereditary predispositions to excellence may prove deceptive. We may easily become too jealous of originality, and do grievous dishonour to our heroes, legislators, and prophets. Still it is obvious that there are physical and moral antecedents, extraneous elements and recognizable forces at work, which do contribute to that grand result,—the life-work of a great man.

A mountain viewed from a distance often gives the impression of unrivalled majesty, but when approached it is seen to be so surrounded and dwarfed by its brother mountains, as to be hardly distinguishable from them; so, 'a great man' loses something of his sublimity and uniqueness as we press along the plains and by-paths of history, and come, as it were, close to him. The figures of some of the heroes of the past, if severed from their antecedents and contemporaries, if viewed



apart from the reaction between themselves and the age in which they lived, do assume supernatural dimensions, or at any rate look so colossal as to appear super-human. If we simply look at the influence and recorded words of Confucius, and leave out of sight the sages who preceded him, and the standard of virtue that had become recognized, if not popular in his day; if we ignore the parallel influence of Mencius, Laotse, and Sakya-Muni, to say nothing of Zoroaster and Mohammed, we might think that his form loomed across the eastern horizon with a grandeur approaching the supernatural, and we could hardly wonder that Chinese philosophers should have written thus of him :—

“All-embracing and vast, he is like heaven. Deep and active as a fountain, he is like the abyss. He is seen, and the people all reverence him; he speaks, and the people all believe him; he acts, and the people all are pleased with him; therefore his fame overspreads the middle kingdom, and extends to all barbarous things. Wherever ships and carriages reach; wherever the strength of man penetrates; wherever the heavens overshadow, and the earth sustains; wherever the sun and moon shine; wherever frosts and dews fall; all who have blood and breath unfeignedly honour and love him. Hence it is said, ‘He is the equal of heaven.’”<sup>1</sup>

If we could imagine Socrates apart from the philosophers and poets who prepared his advent; if we could ignore the group of marvellous men who surrounded him; if the dialogues of Plato constituted the earliest fragment and relic of Greek literature, and we had nothing to compare with them but the rhetorical flourishes and mystic speculations of later ages, we should be disposed to think of Socrates as more than man. The vigour of his conscience and the penetration of his intellect would surprise us into something akin to

<sup>1</sup> *The Chinese Classics*, translated by James Legge, D.D. Vol. i. 293.



worship. If the plays of Shakespere were the only memorials of the Elizabethan age ; if we had nothing to throw light on the education and dramatic feeling of the period ; if we knew nothing of the foreign influences that had been affecting the English stage, nothing of the outburst of imprisoned energies in that marvellous spring-time of the human intellect, Shakespere would be a thousand-fold more incomprehensible than he is.

The same principle is applicable to the pages of Holy Scripture. If we take its single portraitures apart from the long train of high and subtle influences which accompanied the development of the kingdom of God, we obtain a one-sided view of the philosophy of Solomon, the poetry of David, the legislation of Moses, the prophetic insight of Isaiah, and — though we say it with profoundest reverence — of the originality of the teachings of our blessed Lord. We do injustice to the Lord Jesus if we attribute to Him, as to the fontal source and sole original, ideas which a closer study of the Hebrew Scriptures proves to have been the voice of the older revelation. We honour Him vainly and unworthily if we are unwilling to admit that the Jewish sages of His time made use of apologues, and uttered gnomonic sayings which have a strong resemblance to His own. Let us accept with gladness the statement of a great Oriental scholar, who tells us that “the relationship of man to God was pregnantly expressed by those most familiar words which occur from one end of the Talmud to the other, ‘Our Father in heaven.’”<sup>1</sup> The same writer quotes, from this strange fossil forest of Hebrew thought, a gracious spiritualization of “the serpent in the wilder-

<sup>1</sup> *Literary Remains of Emanuel Deutsch*. 1874. p. 148.



ness," an apologue not unlike the parable of the wedding feast, the proverb, "One contrition in man's heart is better than many flagellations;" and he reminds us that Hillel informed a heathen that the substance of the law was, "Do not unto another what thou wouldest not have another do unto thee."<sup>1</sup> It is still more interesting to find in "The Confucian Analects," and in "The Doctrine of the Mean," quite as close an approximation to the golden rule. One of the disciples of the great master asked, "Is there one word which may serve as a rule of practice for all one's life?" The master said, "Is not *reciprocity* such a word? What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others."<sup>2</sup>

The long list of resemblances between the ethics of the New Testament and the maxims of Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius,<sup>3</sup> may sometimes discompose those who have not yet learned that the *Divine* teaching of our race has to a certain extent been an evolution from humanity, as well as a fresh manifestation to it; that our greatest men have in much of their greatness been the expression of what before their appearance was implicitly contained in human nature; that they have rescued from darkness and neglect thoughts and ideas of priceless value, but which are

<sup>1</sup> *Literary Remains of Emanuel Deutsch*. 1874. pp. 31. 55. 57.

<sup>2</sup> *Chinese Classics*, by J. Legge, vol. i.; *Proleg.* p. 110; *C. Analects*, pp. 41 and 165.

<sup>3</sup> Lightfoot's *Commentary on Epistle to the Philippians*; *Dissertation on St. Paul and Seneca*; Sir A. Grant on *The Ancient Stoics*, in his edition of Aristotle's *Ethics*; Farrar's *Seekers after God*. I select a few of the most striking. Seneca, *Ep. Mor.* lxxxvii. 21: "The mind, unless it is pure and holy, comprehends not God." *De Beneficio*, ii. 10: "This is the law of a good deed between two; the one ought at once to forget that it was conferred, the other never to forget that it was received."—"Good does not grow of evil, any more than a fig of an olive tree." *Ep. Mor.* xlvii. 18: "Love cannot be mingled with fear." *De Vita Beata*, 15: "To obey God is liberty."



nevertheless the common property of the moral nature of man—"the work of the law written in the heart."

An exclusive study of antecedents and analogies of genius, and an absorbing attention to the physical genesis of Divine inspirations, may become however as hopelessly one-sided and misleading as the too credulous admiration of the isolated grandeur of our great men. For it is purely impossible to measure, and almost as difficult to exaggerate, the influence of these mighty spirits on the formation of their age, and on the course which the world has taken under their counsels. It is true that sometimes a whole generation has felt the impulse of some blessed hope, has been roused to some deed of enfranchisement to be effected by its own passionate yearning for a better day. Thus the westward movements of the self-governing peoples, swarming off from the theocratic despotisms of the east, and laying the foundation of the modern world; the strange unearthly glow which inspired mediæval Europe to drive back the curse and the shame of Islam from the sites dear to Christian memories; and the varied and multiform efforts of the European mind in the sixteenth century to throw off spiritual despotisms, all indicated the participation by vast multitudes, in certain potent sentiments, as though some vague atmospheric effect had been breathed over a continent. While nations have thus sometimes moved as with one common impulse, such movements can occasionally be traced with distinctness to the passionate convictions of a few individuals. If we imagine non-existent the life and influence of Sakya-Muni, of Homer, of Aristotle and Descartes, of Benedict, of Peter the Hermit, of



Francis of Assisi, of Luther and Wesley, of Alexander and Cæsar, of Charlemagne and Cromwell, we must also imagine the whole history of the world rewritten. The spirit of an age may account for what the little men do ; may gather up into itself the average ability and thinking of a period ; but the laws of men, the grand movements and triumphant forces of humanity have gone forth from kingly centres, from the unique and creative energies of the heaven-sent teachers and leaders of human thought.

Now the Hebrew people were instinct with the conviction of their own high destiny. Though in common with other nations they cherished elevated conceptions of the golden age of their nation and of the world, yet more than any people they lived in the future, they anticipated a triumph of the theocratic principle, they foresaw the establishment in the earth of the kingdom of God. Though the gorgeous vision was built up of materials presented to them by their own national history and cultus, yet their most gifted seers often associated it with the utter disappointment of their favourite plans and with the fall of their national independence. No one doubts that Hebrew prophecy had much to do with the faith of Christendom. If we could accurately sum up the moral influence exerted upon the mind of Israel by the prophetic mission of a succession of great public teachers, and by the prophetic aspect of its ordinary religious observances ; if we could find a test of the degree to which the Old Testament dispensation had prevailed over the thought of Israel, we should have a key to the extraordinary rapidity with which the main truths of the Christian



revelation took possession of the minds of men.<sup>1</sup> There were antecedents and preparations within and beyond the limits of Judaism for the coming of the Incarnate God, and there were channels fashioned in the thoughts and expectations of men along which the river of living water might flow. The Most High devised His bounteous gift, and prepared the intelligence of man to receive it. To understand and estimate these several departments of the Divine working, is to become possessed of a valuable key to the interpretation of the past history of the world.

Nothing, however, is more worthy of regard, than the fact that the antecedents of the gospel, the *preparatio evangelica*, the prophetic hope about the Christ, the various anticipations, the conscious and unconscious predictions of the main features of the new kingdom and of the great King, all fell short of the revelation of the truth in Him. The promise was fundamentally different from, as well as less than, the fulfilment. Near as some of the prophets and psalmists seem to have approached the idea of a spiritual King, a Lamb of God, a good Shepherd, a perfect Sacrifice, and a loving, lovable Lord and God; perhaps there is hardly one of them who would not, from his own exclusive standpoint, have said to Jesus, "Art thou He that should come, or look we for another?" From Moses and Samuel to David and Isaiah, from Jeremiah to John the Baptist, the same solemn word

<sup>1</sup> Compare Jost. *Geschichte des Judenthums—Entstehung des Christenthums*, v. pp. 394. ff., where a learned Jew, looking upon Christianity as the child of the idea of Divine revelation and the kingdom of God current in Judaism, boldly says that not to contemplate the course of the Christian Church in a history of Judaism "would be a sin against the spirit of history."



may have been uttered of the wisest and best of them :—"He that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he."

The revelation of the mind of God concerning the coming of the Second Man was not insignificant nor valueless, but when the sun arose the morning star was lost in His radiance.

A careful study of the preliminaries of Christianity, of the antecedent circumstances, prophecies, and portents which ushered it into the world, is absolutely needed to account for so large a conception of God and man becoming the heritage of the world; but there is no study which reveals so clearly the unique glory of the Christ. We may try to read by star-light; if we succeed, we shall find that there was no surer way of understanding the immeasurable difference between the star-beam and the noontide splendour. Consequently, few meditations will bring into clearer light the majesty of the mind of Christ than a comparison of His thoughts with those which the highest embodiment of Judaism, the noblest exponent of the Old Testament creed had reached before Him. John the Baptist comes very near to Christ. He was an orthodox and honoured functionary; he stood in close relation to the Divine plan for accomplishing the Incarnation, and for the revelation of the fact to the holy people; his influence, his career, his martyrdom, his posthumous fame and sway, afforded a historic parallel to the character and work of the Christ. We see in John an impressive specimen of what, with the assistance of popular adhesion and the direct sense of a Divine commission, could be evolved out of Judaism. We have in him, therefore, a point of comparison



with the Christ and Christianity. There is no other character mentioned in the canonical history who can vie with John in this respect. All the writers of the New Testament are obviously excluded by the simple fact that they do but repeat or transmit the significance of the life and work of Christ Himself. Without Him they can do nothing.

The Old Testament prophets and kings, on the other hand, each contributed something to make up what we mean by Judaism. John may fairly be regarded as the clasp of the two Testaments, the heir of all past ages, and as occupying in the development of the kingdom of God a position which transcends theirs. The relation of John's position to the various tendencies of Jewish thought constitutes him their partial exponent and divinely-sent critic. He was himself possessed of all their advantages, while he is placed on a vantage-ground above them. To judge of *them*, we may make use of any accessible sources of information we please. Pharisee, Sadducee, Essene, may be separately brought into comparison with the Christ, but they can be fairly judged without any reference to John the Baptist. But as John the Baptist cannot be understood without some estimate of them, he becomes in his entirety a much higher and later and more suggestive evolution of Judaism than either of these sects or parties in the Jewish commonwealth.

There are, moreover, other reasons which render the career of John the Baptist worthy of special consideration. It is full of significance that Judaism, by its most venerable authority, should announce its own transitional purpose; that he who took up the torch of



Hebrew prophecy, and for the last time waved it before the darkness of the future, should have it in his power and in his heart to say, "The object of all prophecy, the purpose of all law-giving, the end of all sacrifices, the desire of all nations, is at hand."

Before undertaking to discuss some of the questions suggested by the mission of John the Baptist, let me indicate a few of the ADVANTAGES, and some of the DIFFICULTIES, that attend the inquiry.

### § 2. *The Advantages.*

These consist mainly (1) in the indisputably historical character of John. He is doubtless the subject of much mythical and legendary narrative, and we cannot deny that Oriental fable has done its part in obscuring the facts of his life; but these are so clearly portrayed by Josephus (to say nothing of Josippon Gorionides), that if we had no evangelic narrative, and had never heard of Jesus Christ, we should not be ignorant concerning some of the salient points of John's career. In this way his history becomes a powerful *point d'appui* for the synoptic narrative.

(2) When dealing in these days with the first principles of Christian evidence, we are ready to allow that a class of argument once considered irrefragable and indispensable is now of value only to those who from other reasons hold the holy Scriptures to record the voice and will of God. The miracles must first be established as facts, and their presence justified by the moral teaching they suggest. It cannot be concealed that Christianity is accepted by some, rather in spite of the miraculous element which is inseparably intertwined with it, and



which so abundantly illustrates it, than because of the evidential value of the miracles themselves. The miracles are, as a matter of fact, accepted, under a kind of protest, because of the transcendent value of the truth which they accompany and suggest. Now this is an unreasonable feature of modern thought, and forms one proof that, with all its boast of adequate method for the discovery of truth, it is superficial and inconsistent. No revelation so-called, however momentous may be its theme, can really be other in its first inception than the invincible conviction of some great thinker. It could not become a thought, or take the form of a communicable idea, without conforming to this condition. By some means or other, that which has been thought or said by Moses, by Isaiah, by Jesus, by Paul, by John, has been believed by others to be the thought of God, but it has come through the medium of the minds of these men. There must have been a fontal source for the thought as human thought. Even if the thought has been the gradual impression produced on a generation by a series of wonderful events, those events, which in their relation to one another constitute a history, are not a revelation of Divine intention to mankind until some minds have become alive to their significance, have perceived their inner meaning, have discovered the law of their occurrence, and have uttered it to the world. Now the authentication of particular men as teachers and revealers of Divine thought to the human race has, in many instances, been supposed to be associated with supernatural power; nor can a teacher secure rational assent to the position that he is a God-sent man unless he has some attestation of his claims. This attestation may be nothing more than the com-



plete verification of his words by the consciences and hearts of his hearers. Still this method of attestation restricts the character of his communications to that which is capable of being thus verified. His words may be the sublime of common sense, or the utterance of great principles which are more or less affirmed by every conscience. His teaching may involve a clear understanding of the "signs of the times," and thus have the same effect—to compare large things with small—which an obvious solution of a difficult riddle has upon the proposer of it, or which the sudden insight into the motive or character of another sometimes supplies. In such circumstances, again, the matter of the revelation is limited, and the *Divine* feature of the transaction rendered somewhat dubious by the criticism, that a careful culture of rare gifts of understanding and heart is sufficient to account for the sudden light that has broken in upon the darkness of Divine Providence. But when the prophet has clearly foreseen some apparently contingent event, when he is able to predict the future, not only in its averages or in the law of its evolution, but in its detail, then in the fulfilment of the prediction there is strong confirmation of his claim to be the mouthpiece of the Lord Himself. The future is so absolutely in the control of God, that a knowledge of it, which is neither a fortunate guess nor a scientific prevision based on the uniformity of Divine law, suggests a superhuman, a Divine source. Further, when a word thus uttered is neither a proposition that can be logically demonstrated, nor a prophecy that can have a detailed fulfilment in this life, but touches on the unseen and transcendental region that lies so close to every one of us, I do not see how we can believe



the assertion to be more than the guess of a worthy man, the expectation of a wise teacher, the intuition it may be of a penetrating intellect, unless there is something about this man which attests his Divine commission, and gives him a right to speak. Now such attestation is found in the region of the supernatural, in MIRACLE, and in the signs (*σημεία*) of alliance with the Divine intelligence and will.

The "impossibility of miracle" is perhaps one of the strangest and most unscientific conceits of modern times. Nevertheless it would be uncandid to proceed with any discussion of Christian evidence, while ignoring the circumstance that some of the ablest scientific men of the nineteenth century appear, by their training and methods of inquiry into nature, utterly unable or quite unwilling to concede the possibility of miracle. Now the career of John the Baptist is distinguished by a curious absence of the miraculous element. "JOHN DID NO MIRACLE."<sup>1</sup> Such Divine attestations as he enjoyed, and the proofs we have that "there was a man sent from God whose name was John," lie in another region; nor are they difficult to find, either in the matter of his communications, in the fulfilment of his prophecies, or in the order of men to whom he claimed to belong. This peculiarity, however, renders his biography freer than many other portions of Holy Writ from *primâ facie* objections. If we establish the historical position of John, we vindicate for a notable portion of the evangelical narrative an unquestionable place in the history of the world.

(3) It is reasonable to class among the advantages

<sup>1</sup> John x. 41.



of this inquiry, the circumstance that failure to establish the indubitable place of John in the history would be comparatively unimportant.

Christ had "other witness than that of John," and though John "was a burning and shining torch," "he was not THAT LIGHT," he was not the effluence of the archetypal and veritable Light of the World.<sup>1</sup> The withdrawal of the light of his teaching would not plunge us in utter darkness; nevertheless, any fresh and deep realization of the work of the forerunner cannot fail to have its uses. If he whom all held to be a prophet, and about whom many mused whether he were the Christ; he who was neither "a reed shaken with the wind," nor a place-loving courtier "clothed in soft raiment," but the greatest born of women, and one "sent from God;" if John can be so rescued from the glare of light in which he is practically lost, that he may be heard saying in this nineteenth century what he said with such significance and power in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, some difficulties besetting the study of the life of Christ will be reduced.

(4) In undertaking this task, we shall bring to light the extent and degree to which Old Testament faith had been carried; we shall ponder the most brilliant point in the deep darkness of Christ's contemporary history; we shall find the Hebrew faith unperverted by party, singularly free from personal prejudice, brought into comparison, not merely with Apostolic Christianity, but with the teachings and life of Incarnate God. The opportunity will thus arise for investi-

<sup>1</sup> "Lucerna non lux," as Augustine has it. Λύχνος καίόμενος και φαίνων not Τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινόν. Cf. John v. 35 with i. 9.



gating the contrast between the spirit of John and Jesus, and we shall see the abundant reason that exists for the conclusion that the main function of John was to *teach*, and that of Jesus to *be*; that whereas they both suffered at the hands of the secular power, the death of John contributed in no way to his life-work, while the death of Christ was the corner-stone of Christianity, apart from which the whole subsequent history of the gospel and of the Church would have been impossible.

(5) Again, a study of the ecclesiastical position of John involves a contrast between it and the religious organisation which grew out of the Divine life that there was in Christ. It seems that some of the purely temporary characteristics of the religious life of Judaism, and some of the transitional elements of the forerunner's office and the imperfect aspects of John's theology, have actually passed over into Christianity from John rather than from Jesus. It may then be of considerable advantage to detect their presence in subsequent ages of Christian thought, and so to analyse the composite character of certain institutions and ideas, as to refer them to their true origin.

But as the successive generations of the Church and the various fields of Christian enterprise may resemble the Jewish community in the days of John the Baptist, it becomes a question whether the Church as a whole, and the ministers of the word of God, are justified in an effort to imitate the mission of the Baptist, to repeat his work and follow his methods. If this position be affirmed, the question might then arise, what are the necessary safeguards of such a Johannine Christianity? and what is to prevent the Church from



providing a profitless substitute for the gospel, the life, the baptism, and the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ?

§ 3.

From this review of the probable advantages of a monograph on the career and mission of John the Baptist, it becomes obvious that there are also DIFFICULTIES of no ordinary kind which in their turn must be fairly assailed, and either overcome or candidly admitted. (a) There are certain chronological perplexities which I shall endeavour to grapple with in detail; but I may premise that the extreme brevity of the period during which John produced the remarkable effect upon his fellow-countrymen is of the nature of the miraculous, and can hardly be accounted for on the ordinary principles of human development. Dr. Young, in his "Christ of History," has laid great stress upon the extraordinary brevity of the period of our Lord's ministry, and has contrasted it with the prolonged activities of the prophets and sages of antiquity. He has thus produced a strong argument for the supernatural power with which the life of Christ must have been charged. The period of our Lord's public life leaves more ample space for His marvellous deeds and words than the brief six months during which the young prophet of the wilderness induced Pharisees and Sadducees, publicans and soldiers, to come to his baptism; forced the Sanhedrim to investigate his claims; compelled the haughty potentates who sat on the petty thrones of Palestine to tremble at his moral earnestness and prophetic gifts; and left a name and an influence that will never perish out of the



world. The notes of time furnished by the synoptic narrative are in some respects perplexing, and the co-existence during some months of the ministry of John and of our Lord is also not without its *moral* difficulties. (b) The narrative of the circumstances which preceded and attended the birth of John must be admitted to belong to the class which provokes criticism. It provides material upon which the rationalism of Paulus, the higher criticism of Schleiermacher and Strauss, and the ingenuities of the Tübingen school, have been freely exercised. If the virtually historic character of the transactions detailed in the first chapter of Luke can be maintained against these various opponents, a position is secured of much collateral importance to the biblical student;—for the process of verification and the method of proof are of wide application in the study of the four Gospels. (c) There are *psychological* difficulties, which, if the narrative were free from all suspicion of mythical handling, and moved completely in the region of the natural, are declared by Strauss and De Wette to be incompatible with the truth of the synoptic and Johannine records. They may be briefly stated thus:—

(1) It is difficult to believe that an ascetic reformer, a Nazarite from his birth, a representative of the ancient orders of priest and prophet, a man who in his style and method resembled the fiercest of the old Hebrew seers, should have looked with any complacency upon the career of one who in many respects was his precise moral opposite, and whose work to a large extent would be subversive of his own.

(2) It is very perplexing to find one who believed himself to be the object of prophecy, and the herald



of Jehovah, at the same time firmly convinced of the temporary character of his own mission. It is difficult to believe both, because of the well-known and all but universal selfishness of human nature, and because the two beliefs seem incompatible with each other. It is difficult on historical grounds, because if his influence over the people was as impressive as both Josephus and Luke imply, the effect of his labours seems hardly to correspond with the loftiness of his claims and the clearness of his testimonies.

(3) Further, if the Gospel of John be trustworthy, and the Baptist did bear such remarkable witness to the Person and Work of Jesus as that contained in the first and third chapters of the fourth Gospel, then his subsequent doubts in the prison, as recorded by St. Matthew, become very perplexing. If he perceived that the Lord Jesus was "from above," and "above all;" that He was "the Son of God," "the Lamb of God," and "the Baptizer with the Holy Ghost," how could it be true that "the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he"?

(4) The student of this theme is compelled to grapple further with the wider question of the divergent portraitures that characterize the synoptic and Johannine Gospels. There are others beside John the Baptist whose names occur in the fourth Gospel. The question arises, Are the portraitures of Peter, of John the son of Zebedee, of the Virgin Mary, to say nothing here of that of our Lord, so peculiar to the fourth Gospel, that there are irreconcilable contradictions between them and those representations of the same individuals which occur in the synoptic narrative? Examination will, we believe, show that the portraitures, though different, are not



inconsistent, and that they possess many subtle and wonderful signs of representing the same, and not different individuals. If so, these differences of representation become a proof rather than a violation of historic veracity. No doubt the character of every great man is somewhat mythical, and the representation of it is unconsciously modified by the view taken of him by his contemporaries, and by the spirit with which his biographers have set about their task. It is necessary to analyse the composite elements in any such portraiture, and to exclude from it what may have distorted the picture; yet we often find that even the deliberate presupposition with which a biographical narrative has been produced affords the clue to the understanding of its difficulties.

All great men are many-sided, and the position of the observers, and sympathy with the object of their study, will open the eye of some to peculiarities altogether overlooked by others. The old parallel of the Xenophonic and Platonic conception of Socrates is not yet worn out. Let Izaak Walton and Samuel Johnson give us their conceptions of George Herbert; let Clarendon and Mrs. Hutchinson pourtray the career of Cromwell; let the letters of Cecil and those of the Spanish Ambassador at St. James's be our guides to the character of Mary Stuart; and the differences of representation are enormous, without necessarily involving on either side deviation from perfect veracity.

The synoptic tradition gives the external features of John the Baptist, his public ministry, his moral influence, his official work, his cruel martyrdom. The author of the fourth Gospel communed more closely with John's



inner life, the more spiritual side of his being, and saw him in the light reflected from the face of Jesus.

The subjective elements present in the synoptic portraiture of John the Baptist are singularly colourless. It would be a difficult task to say which of all possible influences is dominant in the representation that has come down to us. There is no striking accord between the narrative and the sentiments of the people from whom on any mythical hypothesis the entire portraiture must have unconsciously proceeded. It is not credible that the traditions of John could have originated among his own unconverted disciples, for the view of his character and mission which is throughout presented in the four Gospels is diverse from their known view of his prophetic standpoint, and is inconsistent with their remaining aloof from the disciples of Jesus. Again, the synoptic tradition does not bear the mark of Christian influences. If the records of the first chapter of Luke had been composed in the middle of the second century, it is incredible that some stronger Hellenic influence should not have been present, *e.g.*, in the song of Zacharias, and in the baptismal teaching of John himself. The legends of the Apocryphal Gospels, and particularly the *Protevangelium Jacobi*, which go over a part of the same ground, show what the mythical tendency traceable in all historical literature has actually done with a substratum of positive fact, and how profoundly different it is from the spirit which produced the evangelic narrative.

The fourth Gospel does however present some special difficulties which must not be ignored. It is undeniable that those particular words and ways of the Baptist are marshalled by the Evangelist which are calculated to



exalt the person and character of the Incarnate Logos, while his moral earnestness and prophetic denunciations of sin are omitted. More than this, the forms of expression which are attributed by the Evangelist John to the Baptist, closely resemble in style and tone those which he describes as proceeding from the lips of Jesus, and which it must be admitted resemble his own style of expression when commenting on the words of either the Baptist or the Lord. This is particularly the case with the closing testimony of John, recorded in John iii.

It would not be difficult to believe that the style of John did actually resemble that of Jesus. It is clear that there was considerable similarity in the themes of their early ministry. We have only to compare the first message and mission of the two, to see the resemblance. This is curiously confirmed by the fact that Herod Antipas entertained the impression and fear that Jesus could be none other than the John whom he had beheaded. This exclamation of Herod given in the synoptic narrative<sup>1</sup> might seem to be somewhat mythical in its tone. The question might easily be asked, How should the Evangelists ever become acquainted with the secret fears or court-gossip of the tetrarch of Galilee? But it is interesting, if not conclusive, to find, that in the company of the women who waited upon the Lord Jesus, one is mentioned by name,<sup>2</sup> "Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward," who would be more likely than any other to have heard the exclamation of the profligate prince. Now this testimony of Herod confirms, in an incidental fashion, the general similarity that prevailed between

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xiv. 1-3 ; Mark vi. 14-16 ; Luke ix. 7-9.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Luke viii. 1-3 and Matt. xiv. 1. See Blunt's *Scriptural Coincidences*, p. 283.



some of the early teachings of the Baptist and of Jesus. If this be so, it lessens the difficulty that one who represents himself as being personally and intimately acquainted with both, when dealing with some of the deeper mysteries of their common teaching, should also reveal the similarity of their modes of expression and choice of words. If these apparently dissimilar representations of John the Baptist are alike historical, he must have been himself a more complex character than has been sometimes supposed. There were diverse aspects of his life and mission that must be taken into account before we can understand him fully. This circumstance ought not to prejudge the inquiry as between the synoptic and Johannine narrative, for the simple reason that the synoptic narrative, taken by itself, and compared with that of Josephus, gives rise to the same suggestion, though with less explicitness. Thus, in Matthew's account taken alone, we find the Baptist represented as saying, "I am not worthy to bear the sandals of Him that is mightier than I;" "I have need to be baptised of Thee, and comest Thou to me?"<sup>1</sup> and yet as during his imprisonment sending His disciples to ask, "Art Thou he that should come, or look we for another?"<sup>2</sup> John the Baptist undoubtedly took independent views and expressed himself impulsively, and in terms that showed how exposed he was to the violence of strong gusts of feeling. Some of these utterances of his, when placed side by side, may appear mutually inconsistent. Now the author of the fourth Gospel selected for his illustration of the self-revelation of the Christ those circumstances which had been omitted by previous writers.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. iii. 11, 14.<sup>2</sup> Ibid. xi. 13.



He brought to light the early ministry of our Lord in Jerusalem, Galilee, and Samaria, before the imprisonment of the Baptist; and he detailed the affecting relations of our Lord with His disciples under the shadow of the cross, and after His resurrection. It is worthy of inquiry, whether the peculiarity of his representation of John the Baptist arises simply from his having adopted a similar plan with reference to *him*. The fourth Evangelist begins where the synoptic Gospels close their detailed representations of the Baptist. The baptism of Jesus was over when the Sanhedrim sent their deputation to John,<sup>1</sup> and all that is said of his ministry in the fourth Gospel is confined to the period that elapsed between the interview that he had with Jesus and his own imprisonment. It therefore bears the impress of the confidences of Jesus and the dazzling glory of the parted heavens. It was, moreover, at the time when the impression was strongest upon him, that "the nameless disciple" heard his esoteric and more intimate outbreathings of new and bewildering faith.

There is, I believe, no single expression attributed by the writer of the fourth Gospel to the Baptist that is not compatible with the character of the forerunner of the Lord Christ and with that of the last of the Hebrew prophets.

The tendencies of a transitional and preparatory period are better comprehended after they have done their work than during the process of their evolution; and, in like manner, truths, the meaning of which the Baptist did not himself fully apprehend, stood forth in

<sup>1</sup> John i. 19.



remarkable clearness to the mind of the fourth Evangelist. They are, however, essentially Hebrew utterances, and it is only their starlight brightness and comparative isolation that suggest a more thoroughly Christian standpoint for the Baptist than he appears to occupy in the pages of the synoptic narrative or in those of Josephus.

That there are difficulties and incongruities, I do not deny, but let us compare two hypotheses that have been advanced for their explanation. One is, that the author of the fourth Gospel dramatised the character and teaching of John, and conscious of the new colouring he was giving to an established tradition, drew his portrait in bad faith, in order to accomplish a theological purpose; and that he also endeavoured to make his fancy portrait pass current as the work of one peculiarly qualified to state the whole case with accuracy. It must be added, that this same theological purpose was to describe one who was full of grace and truth, and to induce hearty, entire, implicit faith in Him as the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

The other hypothesis is, that the Baptist was not fully represented, either by Josephus or by the synoptic Evangelists, and that one who knew him better than they has preserved for us a portraiture of him, at a particular epoch of his life, without which he cannot be adequately appreciated. I cannot dismiss the subject without some examination of a more general theme, viz. :—

#### § 4. *Special Portraits of the Fourth Gospel.*

The fourth Evangelist inserts graphic touches with reference to other celebrated characters mentioned in



the synoptic narrative, of which that narrative would not suggest the faintest idea. It is thus that we learn much concerning Philip, Andrew, Bartholomew, and Thomas, to which, apart from the fourth Gospel, we should have been utter strangers. The author moreover indicates salient points of character by a few suggestive words. The whole conception of the character of Thomas is due to certain utterances attributed to that apostle, which only in their combination reveal successive stages of passionate but desponding love, of exacting scepticism, of adoring and triumphant faith. Without this record we should never have known the depth of feeling and the vividness of intuition with which that restless and speculative mind was charged. There is however nothing in the representation inconsistent with the statements of the synoptic narrative. Again, John the son of Zebedee is portrayed in the first three Gospels with somewhat hard outline. He is described as a fisherman, a friend and partner of Simon, a brother of James. "He is a son of thunder,"<sup>1</sup> though what that phrase means we do not certainly know. He was ready, like Elias, to call down fire from heaven upon the enemies of Christ; he was so far ignorant of the spirit of the new kingdom, as to forbid the independent follower of Christ from casting out dæmons in his Master's name; he did not prevent his mother Salome from coming to the Saviour with a vain and presumptuous request on his behalf.<sup>2</sup> At first sight all this is profoundly different from the representation given of himself by the author of the fourth Gospel, as the disciple especially loved by Jesus; the confidant of the Lord's deepest suffering and

<sup>1</sup> Mark iii. 17.<sup>2</sup> Luke ix. 54; Matt. xx. 20.



bitterest reproach; the friend to whom the mother of Jesus was especially entrusted, and one whose own words breathe a sweetness and fragrance unrivalled in all literature. It would be wrong to ignore the conclusions which many great scholars have deduced from this contrast. They have coupled the synoptic portrait of John with the leadership of the Jewish party in the Church at Jerusalem (Gal. ii.), with the traditional account of his sympathy with Jewish feeling on the Paschal controversy, with the Hebrew and prophetic character of the Apocalypse, and have said that "the disciple whom Jesus loved," who professes to have written the fourth Gospel, is altogether another personage. It can scarcely be doubted that the author means to pass for the son of Zebedee, therefore we have to choose between the twofold representation. While I do not pretend to discuss the vast question of the authorship of the fourth Gospel, it is necessary to my present task to touch briefly on the validity of its portraiture, and the additions the author is in the habit of making to the conception of every individual to whom he refers. This he does notably with reference to himself. But is the new light thrown upon the character of the Apostle John really incompatible with the older representations? In our opinion, both the synoptic and Johannine representations reveal also some very marvellous coincidences. We must not forget that it is Matthew, Mark, and Luke who assure us that Peter and James and *John* were the three most highly-favoured of the apostles; that John was admitted to the closest intimacy with the Lord, and permitted to witness His loftiest triumphs and His deepest humiliation. On the other hand, the fourth Gospel, notwithstanding all the



tenderness of its tone, yet contains most unsparing condemnation of unfaithfulness, unbelief, and unfruitfulness. The language of our Lord, as recorded in the Gospel of John (vii., viii., ix.), goes far to explain the enthusiastic severity with which the son of Zebedee would have dealt with inhospitable Samaritans. The fourth Gospel makes us acquainted with the fact that "the other disciple," who is the author of the Gospel, was one of the earliest followers of the second Elijah, and this may not be without significance when we trace elsewhere a representation of the harder and narrower side of the Baptist's nature. The fact is that the representation which the fourth Evangelist gives of himself is compatible with, and complementary to, the outline of his own life and character preserved by the synoptists. The difference and supposed inconsistency of the two portraitures are more apparent than real. We are not justified in rejecting either the one or the other, but believe ourselves bound to blend them in our conception of the son of Zebedee. The gentleness and tenderness of his soul must have been capable of kindling into fervent enthusiasm; his narrowness, and the limited range of his sympathies, when viewed from some standpoints, are not incompatible with the intensity of that love which could press into the judgment hall, and follow the Master to His shame and His cross. With the synoptic narrative in our hand, we should not have given John the son of Zebedee the credit of writing the philosophic prologue to the Gospel, or arranging his material with such artless skill that it has the effect of consummate art, or of holding in his mind for a generation the conversations and discourses of the Baptist and the Lord Jesus. But it should be borne in mind



that whilst Caiaphas, Pilate, the family at Bethany, and the Magdalene, when they are seen through the medium of this writer's mind, all alike receive touches of portraiture for which we look in vain elsewhere; still, they are not so strange nor so new as to be incompatible with history.

A study of the double portraiture of Simon Peter will confirm the conclusion. M. Renan has charged on the fourth Evangelist<sup>1</sup> a personal antagonism to Peter, and a jealous desire to represent him as occupying a less distinguished position than he really filled. This statement is not accurate. It is the fourth Gospel that tells us of the earliest interview between our Lord and Simon, and of the penetration of his true character by the Master.<sup>2</sup> It is in John vi. 67, 68, that Peter's memorable utterance is preserved, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life, and we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." Synoptists, rather than John, record the melancholy presumption with which Peter would have dissuaded his Master from spiritual sacrifice, and also the momentous condemnation which the Lord pronounced upon him: "Get thee behind Me, Satan, for thou art an offence to Me."<sup>3</sup> The occurrence described by

<sup>1</sup> *Vie de Jesus*. Introduction, xxvii. "Les relations en somme fraternelles quoique n'excluant pas une certaine rivalité de l'auteur avec Pierre . . semblent percer çà et là. On est tenté de croire que Jean, dans sa vieillesse, ayant lu les récits évangéliques qui circulaient, d'une part, y remarqua diverses inexactitudes, de l'autre, fut froissé de voir qu'on ne lui accordait pas dans l'histoire du Christ une assez grande place; qu'alors il commença à dicter une foule de choses qu'il savait mieux que les autres, avec l'intention de montrer que dans beaucoup de cas où on ne parlait que de Pierreu, il avait figuré avec et avant lui." The same thing is repeated p. 159, the passages referred to being John xviii. 15, xix. 26-27, xx. 2, xxi. 7-21.

<sup>2</sup> John i. 42.

<sup>3</sup> Mark viii. 29-33.



John<sup>1</sup> as having taken place at the Last Supper, though showing the impulsive eagerness of Peter's love to his Master, is perfectly compatible with his entire character as portrayed by the synoptists. There is not a trace of bitterness in the record. The melancholy failure of Peter's faith in the palace of the high priest is told in substantially the same form by the four Evangelists, but less reproachfully by John than by Mark. The former throws a little blame upon himself in the matter, and though he does not speak of Peter's repentance, he devotes space to the delineation of the whole mind and conduct of Peter on that memorable night,<sup>2</sup> and details the special honour that was conferred on Peter after the resurrection.<sup>3</sup> But while nothing can be less true than the presence of an anti-Petrine animus in the fourth Gospel, it is with singular interest that we trace through the entire narratives—including the Acts of the Apostles—intimations of a rare complexity and originality in the character of Simon Peter. John simply gives new and confirmatory illustrations. An important parallel is perceptible in the revelation of Peter's *character* which appears in the synoptic narrative of his walking upon the sea, on which John is strangely silent, and the remonstrances and instructive mistakes made by Peter when the Master offered to wash his feet, and which John alone records. The extraordinary disposition on the part of Peter to take the initiative even with the Lord Jesus, to remonstrate even with his Master, as in the vision of the descending sheet,<sup>4</sup> to hurry into mistake, to make promises and proposals he was unable to fulfil,

<sup>1</sup> John xiii. 6-9.<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 23, 36-38 = xviii. 10, 11.<sup>3</sup> Ibid. xx. 2 ; xxi. throughout.<sup>4</sup> Acts x. 11.



together with his impetuosity, intensity, and forwardness, his prominence and dignity, his weakness and strength, are all revealed in the fourth Gospel. Yet they are presented under a new class of illustrations of far greater depth and significance than in those of the earlier tradition.

It is foreign to the purpose of the present inquiry to enter upon the genuineness of the fourth Gospel, or discuss the leading features of the *synoptic* and *Johannine* CHRIST. There are conspicuous differences between them, but they are differences due to the many-sidedness of the great life, not to the bad faith and theological motive of the fourth Evangelist. They are due to different choice of materials, to a different eye for facts, and to the essential difference between a partially traditional and an expressly personal biography. An oral gospel,<sup>1</sup> and probably written documents preserving the words of the Lord, must have been in wide circulation before it was possible for three writers, without concert or comparison of their several works, to have produced biographies which are characterised alike by strange and numerous verbal coincidences as well as by grave differences.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, John's Gospel

<sup>1</sup> The various hypotheses which have been hazarded to account for the verbal coincidences and discrepancies of the first three Gospels, from the complicated theory of Eichhorn and Herbert Marsh down to the ingenious speculation of Smith of Jordanhill, leave grave suspicion upon the mind. No system of arrangement is satisfactory, notwithstanding the ingenuity of the theory as wrought by Griesbach, Gresswell, De Wette, and Meyer, by which either Matthew, or Mark, or Luke is supposed to have been the producer of the original document, and to have afforded the nucleus on which the others have laboured. The effort of Keim to discover a separate original kernel of both Matthew and Luke is singularly arbitrary.—*Life of Jesus of Nazara*, by Theod. Keim, D.D. Vol. i. pp. 67–115 of E. translation, 1873.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. A. Norton, on *The Genuineness of the Gospels*, 2 vols., propounded in detail the theory of the origin of the first three Gospels, which Davidson, 1848, Alford, Westcott, in part accepted, based upon the facts of the extraordinary prominence of verbal coincidence in the reported speech, and of divergence in



betrays throughout the record of an eye-witness, who detailed the conversations and incidents which were apparently entrusted to his memory alone. The length of some of the discourses is not a valid objection to their genuineness, if alleged, as is often the case by those who accept the synoptic Gospels as authentic and reliable, because Matthew and Luke alike, on their sole authority, preserve discourses of equal length and importance.

Schenkel, Renan, Keim and Strauss, Tayler, Dr. Davidson,<sup>1</sup> and many others, have laid emphasis on the completeness and full development of the Christ of the fourth Gospel from the beginning of His ministry. They say there is in the fourth Gospel no growth, no development, no evolution of the claims and ideas of Jesus. His appearance in His earliest ministry in Galilee, is like the dawning of an unclouded sun on the horizon; and such as He proclaims Himself in the first chapter of this Gospel, He continues to the last. But—

(1) Such a representation ignores the progress of Christ's teaching in the fourth Gospel. It is enough to contrast, *e. g.*, the language He addresses to the Jews in the temple (chap. ii.) with that which He utters, at a later period, in the presence of the Greeks; or His conversation with Nicodemus with His inter-

the narrative portions. That the words of Jesus should very early have been handed from lip to lip, and preserved with extraordinary accuracy in the form of *λογια, λεχθεντα*, is in harmony with all that we know of the habit of recording and preserving in memory the words of great Hebrew teachers.

<sup>1</sup> *Sketch of the Character of Jesus*, a Biblical Essay by D. Schenkel, translated from third German edition, 1869, pp. 23, ff. "In the fourth Gospel, there is no trace of a gradual development of His religious and Messianic self-consciousness, or a perceptible growth of His inner life. He is already at the first what He continues to be at the end." *The Fourth Gospel*, by J. J. Tayler, pp. 4, 5, to the same effect. Keim, *l.c.* pp. 155-159, gives another character to the purpose or *aim* of the writer, but speaks of "the immovable, constant, and monotonous figure which is preserved by means of artistic heightening of all kinds until the end." *Introduction to the Study of the New Testament*, by S. Davidson, D.D. 1868. Vol. ii. 343.



cessory prayer in which he reveals the union between Himself and His disciples.

(2) The representation of the Christ, whether by the first three Evangelists or the fourth, does not profess to introduce Him to us during the period of His physical or intellectual growth. He is brought before us by each Evangelist in the fulness and completeness of His manhood. The entire length of His ministry, if we confine ourselves to the chronology of the synoptists, barely exceeds a single year. It is not reasonable to expect rapid or conspicuous changes of front, or variations in his methods of self-revelation; nor can we suppose, even on the humanitarian hypothesis, that one who exercised such potent influence upon His contemporaries, and upon the whole history of our world, should have entered on His work as a reed shaken with the wind, ready to be flattered by affectionate response, moulded by political opposition, or forced into new attitudes by the changing breath of human appreciation. The eighteen years that elapsed between His first appearance in the temple and His subsequent cleansing of the consecrated courts, must have been passed in deep pondering of His course and vivid anticipations of the reception which awaited Him. It is incredible that the first period of His Galilean ministry should have elapsed before He discovered what was the temper of the generation that He came to save. There is nothing approximating the unhistorical in a representation of so original and life-giving a Teacher as Jesus of Nazareth appearing from the first to the last of His brief ministry as one who perfectly understood what He Himself was, what He intended to accomplish, and how His great work must be effected. The



strength of this position is augmented a hundredfold when we see that the "presupposition" of the fourth Evangelist is, that Jesus was the incarnation of the Logos, the dwelling-place of the eternal Spirit, the only begotten Son of God, who was conscious, while He walked the earth, of being "in heaven," of being "in the bosom of the Father," and of remembering "the glory He had with the Father before the world was." In the career of such epoch-making men as Socrates, Augustine, Luther, or Calvin, we expect to trace the growth of their ideas and character. In the case of Christ, over the whole period of His mental and physical development a veil is thrown by Divine Providence.

(3) The entire method by the application of which such a growth and development of ideas is attributed by some modern writers to the synoptic Christ, is liable to grave exception. It is effected by an arbitrary arrangement of the chronological outline of our Lord's life. It is enough for Renan or Schenkel to find a joyous, bright, hopeful word of Jesus, to refer it at once to the first year of His ministry; if they discover a melancholy utterance, one trumpet-note of wrath, a scathing criticism of formalism, a word of warning or of doom, they refer it with equal certainty and confidence to the later period of His ministry, *i. e.*, after He had encountered the practical rejection and murderous malice of the Jews. This appears to me to set at nought the entire order of the synoptic narrative, to misread the Sermon on the Mount, to ignore the early rejection by the Nazarenes, to overlook the sad, upbraiding tone of some of the very earliest instructions of the Lord,<sup>1</sup> the

<sup>1</sup> Matt. vi. 2-5; vii. 15-22; x. 16-27, 34; xi. 16-24; xii. 14; with parallels in other Gospels.



sublime jubilation of portions of His latest parables,<sup>1</sup> and the sweet pity and Divine tenderness of the parables recorded in the fifteenth chapter of Luke, and of the scenes in the houses of Zacchæus, Simon, and Lazarus.

The same general remark may be made with reference to the Johannine portraiture of the Baptist. It is a matter for devout thankfulness that such eyes as those of John the son of Zebedee were employed to perceive the meaning of the ministry of John the Baptist.<sup>2</sup>

It is not every man who has the chance of seeing an Alpine sunrise, and of those who do, there are comparatively few into whose souls the stupendous majesty and pathetic beauty of the mountains freely pass; but of those whose spirits are transfigured, or even touched by the "mountain-glory," still fewer can so describe what they have seen as to awaken corresponding emotions in other hearts.

Now, of all the multitudes who saw the Lord or heard the Baptist in the wilderness, comparatively few were deeply impressed by their words. A large proportion

<sup>1</sup> Luke xiv., xv. ff.

<sup>2</sup> I venture to hazard the confident conviction that the assault on the genuineness of the fourth Gospel has failed. Surely Lücke answered the criticisms of Bretschneider and Strauss; and Ebrard, Tholuck, and Luthardt have demolished the speculation of Baur. It is full of interest to observe that Renan is not shaken from his position of its virtual authenticity; that Keim, l.c. pp. 184-196, has, notwithstanding his relinquishment of its apostolic origin, done much to establish its antiquity; and in opposition to Zeller, Volkmar, Baur, and even to Ewald, he justifies belief of its traces in Justin Martyr, and in the writings of those Gnostics that are referred to in the *Philosophoumena*, in the *Shepherd of Hermas*, and *Barnabas*, and justly asks, "What older and better witnesses have we for the synoptic Gospels?" Dr. Davidson's (l.c. i. pp. 320-468) elaborate treatment of the subject admits that "it is difficult to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion. He inclines to an innocent and even sublime forgery of "a great unknown," who has "seized the Spirit of Christ better than an apostle."



of avowed disciples were still ignorant, narrow-minded, selfish, unsympathetic. Even among the twelve apostles there were fundamental differences of perception and reproduction, and within that little group there was a narrower circle still, which was admitted to the closest friendship and deepest intimacy with the Lord; while of these it may be said that few men could have been less alike in the fundamental element of their inspiration than Peter and John. The minds of Peter and Matthew may have easily appreciated the significance of the early and prophetic ministry of John the Baptist, up to his introduction to the Messiah, and there *they* may have stopped. It is, however, a happy thing, that that "other disciple," who had been his follower for several months, and who witnessed the baptism of Jesus, and saw the effect of it on the Baptist, should have recorded words and traits of character which escaped the less meditative and more hasty judgments of his companions.

### § 5. *The Political Surroundings of the Career of John.*

Before making use of the evangelic narratives as our chief sources of information with reference to the history and character of John the Baptist, I shall endeavour to set forth the political and historical surroundings of the prophet, and to exhibit the grounds on which, independently of the New Testament, he takes his place in history.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Compare Grätz, *Geschichte der Juden*, vol. iii. ; Jost, *Geschichte des Judenthum und seinen Secten*, 1857 ; Keim, l.c. vol. i., 229, ff. ; Kitto's *Pictorial History of Palestine* ; M. Schneckenburger, *Vorlesungen über Neutestamentliche Zeitgeschichte*. 1862, pp. 190, ff. ; Heinrich Ewald, *Geschichte Christus und seinen Zeit*. 2te. Ausg., 1857, pp. 11-60 ; Milman's *History of the Jews*, vol. ii. 1-91.



The history of Palestine during the lifetime of John the Baptist, if read in the pages of Josephus, forms a strange contrast to the scenes and events recorded in the evangelic history. There are in the latter, faint hints of turmoil and civil strife, of dynastic change and licentious intrigue, and also of angry political and religious excitement; but the period of the ministry of the forerunner and his Lord is suffused in the sacred records with the glow which is reflected from the Divine Person of the Lord, while deep shadows fall from every other personage and incident, concealing from our view the ordinary daily life of the people and their leaders. Thus we hear of the death of "Herod the king;" and one act of superstitious fear and one freak of mad cruelty consistent with his known character are attributed to him. The "hegemony" of Cyrenius, the reigns of Augustus and Tiberius Cæsar are mentioned, together with the procuratorship of Pontius Pilate. Several members of the Herodian family just flit across the sacred light, for a moment are visible to our gaze, and then are lost in darkness. Thus Archelaus, the son of Herod, is referred to as the successor to the power of Herod in Judæa. The apparent expectation of Joseph,<sup>1</sup> that another prince might have been sitting on Herod's throne, is not explained by the Evangelist, nor is it stated by him that the dominions of Herod were at his death divided among his sons. Josephus details at length the outbreak of sedition on the part of the Jews, the testamentary dispositions of Herod, the final decision of the emperor in favour of Archelaus, and the fact that Herod Antipas, another son of Herod by the same Samaritan woman Malthace,<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Matt. ii. 22.<sup>2</sup> *Antiq.* xvii. 1. 3. 8; *B. J.* ii. 1, 2.



who had originally been designed by his father as his successor, was, by the last change of Herod's will, made tetrarch of Galilee and Peræa.

We hear in the evangelic narrative of the adulterous, illegal, incestuous union of this Antipas with the wife of his half-brother Philip, and also of Salome the daughter of this woman by her first and still living husband; but we must go elsewhere to see the full point of the reproof of the Baptist, the aggravation of the guilt of Antipas, how he had been for some years the husband of the daughter of Aretas, king of Arabia, and how the wrongs of the divorced wife ultimately led to the chastisement of Herod, and to the slaughter of the army which he sent to resist the Arabian invader.<sup>1</sup> Again, we hear of Galileans whose blood Pontius Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices, thus outraging the feelings of the Jews, and the *amour-propre* of Herod, the tetrarch of Galilee; and we hear also how Pontius Pilate and Herod became friends by the effort which Pilate made on a memorable occasion to show respect for the jurisdiction of Herod. We hear of Herod's licentiousness and craft, of his senseless oath, and of his crime in keeping it, when he thereby sacrificed a brave man whom he could not but respect. We must go to Josephus for further information on the character and deeds of this Galilean prince, his magnificence, his costly architectural schemes, the cities which he founded in Galilee, the fortress he built in Peræa, his ambition, and its disappointment and ultimate failure.<sup>2</sup> Once the evangelic narrative speaks of him as *King* Herod<sup>3</sup>—a title

<sup>1</sup> *Antiq.* xviii. 5. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* xviii. 2. 3. 6; *Vita*, 9; *B. J.* ii. 9. 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Mark* vi. 14. See also *B. J.* i. 33.



bestowed in courtesy, though never secured by the crafty prince. This is a touch of reality, because we learn elsewhere that it was Herod's feverish desire to emulate the title of king—a rank which Agrippa, his nephew, acquired from his friend the Emperor Caligula—that cost him his tetrarchate, and led to his disgrace, exile, and death.<sup>1</sup>

The Gospels indicate very clearly the fact that the civil and religious authority of Palestine, whether wielded by native princes or not, whether concentrated in high-priestly hands or not, was, alike in matters of tribute, of forced labour, of coinage, of military service, and of supreme political executive, thoroughly absorbed by Roman absolutism. We see traces of strong party feeling and antagonism to Roman domination, as when it appears that a question of great practical moment had arisen, "Is it lawful to pay tribute to Cæsar?" The Lord Himself used an illustration that all the inhabitants of the various tetrarchates of Palestine must have thoroughly understood, when he said, "A certain nobleman went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom and to return."<sup>2</sup>

There was a moderate party in the state, who sought, through all the long and bloody contest that ensued, to reconcile their fellow-countrymen to the inevitable burden of Roman occupation, and were thus irreconcilably opposed to the fanatical outbursts of wild patriotism which Josephus chronicles, and to which the sacred writers are compelled frequently to refer. Thus we hear incidentally of Judas in the days of the taxing, and of Theudas,<sup>3</sup> and of the Egyptian whose wild, ill-judged outbursts of patriotism were crushed

<sup>1</sup> *B. J.* ii. 2.<sup>2</sup> *Luke* xix. 12.<sup>3</sup> *Acts* v. 36, 37.



by a combination of Roman and native power;<sup>1</sup> and there were always in the Sanhedrim men like Caiaphas, who thought that mighty deeds and grand ideas, such as those of Jesus, would ultimately lead to such a conflict between Rome and Judæa as could terminate only in the utter overthrow of their national life.<sup>2</sup> There were Pharisees like Gamaliel, who were always ready to let things take their course, who could recognize the hand of God in national uprisings, and were unwilling to be found fighting against God.<sup>3</sup> The knell of national independence was indeed sounding when the excited priesthood and turbulent mob, who were seeking by turns to cajole or terrify Pilate, brought him to do their bidding on the true Messiah by the base cry, "We have no king but Cæsar."<sup>4</sup> There is a hint of the fact that the gorgeous temple of Herod was in process of erection, and we hear once of "the beautiful gate of the temple;" we read of prayer and sacrifice within its courts; of the priestly service and sacramental rites; of the great national feasts of the Passover, of Tabernacles, and Pentecost, and also of the feast of the Dedication of the Temple, and possibly of that of Purim. But we must turn to the narratives of other writers for a full exposition of the stupendous and glittering pile of buildings in which these festivals were celebrated. The period that is crowded with events that are of such imperishable interest to us, is charged with political excitement of another kind. Between the birth of John and his "showing unto Israel," while Jesus, "subject to" his parents in the village of Naza-

<sup>1</sup> Acts xxi. 38.

<sup>2</sup> "If we let Him thus alone, all men will believe on Him, and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation."—*John* xi. 48.

<sup>3</sup> Acts v. 34-39.

<sup>4</sup> *John* xix. 15.



reth, was "fulfilling all righteousness," and approving Himself to God as the beloved and only begotten Son, in whom the Father was well pleased, events of mighty import were taking place in Palestine. The co-existence of such different and apparently incompatible elements is not peculiar to these great lives. The inner life of many a saint and sage has been passed far out of hearing of "the stunning tide" of this world's sin and greed. The splash of many a fountain has made year after year a secret music for itself in some hidden dell, while the roar of the torrents and the thunder of the breakers, the tempest and the earthquake, have been elsewhere doing their dread work. The parents of John and of Jesus must have endured the stormy and dread magnificence of Herod's reign. They must have realized all the indignation of the priestly race over the murder of Aristobulus, and the cruel death of Mariamne and her sons and of the aged Hyrcanus. They must have felt the grinding oppression and extortion which enabled Herod to cover the land with fortresses and palaces, and to lavish Jewish wealth on foreign cities. They must have watched the growth of Gentile customs, games, and unlawful symbolism, which almost made Cæsarea into a pagan city, and dared to place the Roman eagle on the main entrance of the temple. When Herod pillaged David's tomb, when he practically abolished the great council of the nation, when he blinded Jochanan the scholar of Hillel, and when from his hideous death-bed he issued his last bloody edicts of wholesale massacre, the gentle spirits of those who were waiting for the consolation of Israel must have been lacerated and bewildered by a sense of unutterable wrong. The massacre at Bethlehem,



unmentioned by Josephus, might easily be overlooked amid the long catalogue of horrors, even if the historian had no other reason for his reticence.<sup>1</sup>

The troubled accession of Archelaus to the throne of Judæa, and the division of Herod's dominions into several tetrarchies, doubtless brought back to their minds the old rivalries of earlier days. At one time the extortions of Archelaus were being tried by imperial tribunals in Rome, and Antipas was rushing post-haste thither, hoping to supplant his brother and secure his inheritance. During the absence of the Herodian princes, Roman procurators were gradually assuming supreme power in Jerusalem. Thus Sabinus seized the citadels, and provoked the desperate animosity of the people. Slaughter and the crucifixion of thousands followed the insurrection, and ultimately crushed it. The wish of the people, openly expressed, to have a Roman ruler rather than Archelaus, reveals the bitter hatred inspired by the tyranny of Herod. "At no time of their history, not even after their return from exile, had the nation been more wretched."<sup>2</sup>

"There were" (says Josephus, in his usual tone of exaggeration) "ten thousand other disorders in Judæa, which were like tumults, because a great number put themselves in a warlike posture, either out of hope of gain to themselves, or out of enmity to the Jews. In particular, two thousand of Herod's old soldiers, who had been already disbanded, got together in Judæa itself, and fought against the king's troops, although Achiabus, Herod's first cousin, opposed them; but as he was driven out of the plains into the mountainous parts by the military skill of those men, he kept himself in the fastnesses that were there, and saved what he could."<sup>3</sup>

In similar style we are told of the sack of Herod's city of Sepphoris, by men of the same wild fanatical spirit, under the leadership of Judas of Gamala, pos-

<sup>1</sup> *Antiq.* xv., xvi., xvii. See Milman's *History*, chap. xi.   <sup>2</sup> Keim, l.c. i. p. 251.

<sup>3</sup> *Antiq.* xvii. 10. 4.



sibly the Theudas to whom Gamaliel referred; of the burning, by the party of Simon, of "the royal palace of Amathus, near the river Jordan." We hear of the giant Athronges and his four brethren, who by sheer physical strength usurped the title and honours of royalty, and came into direct conflict with the representatives of Archelaus. "Judæa," says Josephus, "was full of robberies, and as the several companies of the seditious lighted upon any one to head them, he was created a king, in order to do mischief to the public."<sup>1</sup>

It became more and more apparent that these semi-native princes were mere puppets in the hands of Rome, that the sceptre of the Hasmonean dynasty had fallen from its grasp, and had for ever departed from Judah. At length even Josephus tells, without a blush,<sup>2</sup> of the deposition of Archelaus, of the arrival of Roman procurators in his place, and their succession under the suzerainty of the pro-consul of Syria. Roman noblemen of various degrees of excellence make their appearance on the scene, while Josephus simply says, "Coponius, a man of equestrian order, was sent, together with him (Quirinus), to have supreme power over the Jews."

The effort of Quirinus to enforce and accomplish the census of the people (A.U.C. 759-760) roused the wildest resistance, and Judas the Gaulonite, with Zadok the Pharisee, might have anticipated the final revolt against Rome, if there had not been a division of interests in the Pharisaic camp. As it was, the help of the Syrian army enabled Coponius to crush Judas and his zealots,

<sup>1</sup> *Antiq.* xvii. 10. 7.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* xvii. 13. 3. Josephus affects to soften the matter by a dream, which, in the opinion of an Essene who endeavoured thus to interpret it, portended the result.



and leave the seeds of undying hatred to the Roman slavery germinating in the national conscience.<sup>1</sup>

Few things are much more affecting than to read Josephus's unimpassioned account of the succession of procurators of Judæa, and their immediate interference with the occupants of the high-priestly office. Thus the names of Coponius, Marcus Ambivius, Annius Rufus, Valerius Gratus, and Pontius Pilate, are barely mentioned, and, with the exception of the last, little more is said of them.

During the remaining years of Augustus a policy of something like reconciliation prevailed, and his contributions to the temple worship produced partial restoration of better feeling. It was during the procuratorship of Annius Rufus that Augustus died (A.U.C. 767). The representatives of Tiberius who followed, *viz.*, Valerius Gratus and Pontius Pilate, carried the tyrannical spirit of their master into their relations with Judæa. Valerius Gratus frequently changed the high priests, until he satisfied himself that in the person of Caiaphas he should find a ready instrument of his will. The haughty insolence of Pilate, and his endeavour to bring the effigies of the Cæsar into Jerusalem, roused such stern and desperate animosity, such a willingness on the part of the Jews to die rather than defile their sacred city, that Pilate desisted from his unwise intention, and presently commanded the images to be carried from Jerusalem to Cæsarea.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In the careful treatment of the career of Judas the Gaulonite, in Ewald's *Christus*, pp. 18–30, he says truly: "Dass der Gaulonäer mit seinem engem Anhang sich dennoch nicht unterwarf und offenen Astand zu erregen suchte, versteht sich von selbst: doch Josephus geht schweigend über sein Ende hin. Wir wissen aber sonst dass er durch Waffengewalt unterging und sein ganzer Anhang zersprengt wurde, ferner dass er obwohl jung gefallen seine Gesinnungen auf seine in späteren Jahren ähnlich umkommende Söhne vererbte."

<sup>2</sup> *Antiq.* xviii. 3. 1.



The Jews refused the benevolent intention of Pilate to supply Jerusalem with water, mainly because he proposed devoting to the purpose some of the temple treasure. They suffered grievously for their seditious outbreak, but the intensity of their hatred smouldered on until, in the tenth year of his presidentship, Pilate was recalled to Rome, which however he did not reach until Tiberius was dead.

Among other scattered incidents, we hear of the gross speculation of which some few Jews resident in Rome were guilty, which led to the expulsion, by Tiberius, from the metropolis, of no fewer than four thousand Jews, who thus became the scape-goat of their brethren's sins. Incidents like these must have been detailed in the market-places of the crowded cities and villages of Galilee,<sup>1</sup> and deeply stirred the sacred fellowship of the hill country of Judæa. The priesthood had degenerated into the mere tool of the Roman president. The throne of David had once more been trampled into dust. Profligacy and cunning had usurped the place of bold and spiritual patriotism. A fringe of Gentile forces and influences had surrounded the sacred institutions of Judaism. Greek games had been celebrated in Cæsarea, if not under the very shadow of the temple of Jerusalem. The tower of Hyrcanus, where the high-priestly vestments were kept, had been transformed into a great Roman fortress, and had been so built into the very *enceinte* of the temple, as to dominate over its worship. The great council of the nation was made dependent upon the whim of a Roman official for the execution of its most solemn decrees. Tumults, collision of

<sup>1</sup> See two remarkable articles, by Rev. Selah Merrill, on "Galilee in the time of our Lord," in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, January and April, 1874.



personal interests, war and bloodshed, uncertainty and haunting fear of something worse, vexed the daily life of the people. Even the mountain solitudes, where John was pondering his Divine commission, must have often been thronged by red-handed ruffians and religious fanatics; and the villagers of Galilee must have seen the building and the demolition of the glittering palaces and flourishing cities in the spurs of Lebanon or on the banks of the great inland lake.

The circumstance that the father and mother of Jesus heard of the occupation of the throne of Judæa by Archelaus,<sup>1</sup> is given as at least one of the reasons why they should turn aside into parts of Galilee. There was doubtless a sufficient justification in the mind of Joseph for this change of plan and abode. His previous residence in Nazareth, as described by Luke,<sup>2</sup> may have been the chief reason of this choice, but there was an obvious difference between the character of the ethnarch of Judæa and that of the tetrarch of Galilee. With the one exception of Antipater, Archelaus was the most tyrannical and selfwilled of the sons of Herod; and he was more likely to carry out the bloodthirsty design of his father than was Herod Antipas, who, as Roman representative in Galilee, would have far less reason than Archelaus to dread a supposed claimant to his throne. For forty-three years, at least, Antipas held the position which is assigned to him in the New Testament. We might know this from the existence of a coin which was struck in the forty-third year of his reign, and which couples his name with that of Caius, as the Augustus of the Roman world.<sup>3</sup> During these forty-three years

<sup>1</sup> Matt. ii. 22.<sup>2</sup> Luke ii. 4.<sup>3</sup> Gresswell's *Dissertations*. Vol. i. Diss. 6.



violent revolutions took place in the political position of the subject princes. Archelaus had fallen, and the succession of the Roman governors had ruled Judæa with iron hand. Herod Antipas had married and lived for many years with the daughter of Aretas, a king of Arabia Nabatæa. The name is a common one, frequently occurring among those of Arabian princes. Once the temporary triumphs of this very man placed Damascus under his jurisdiction; and an Arabian ethnarch, representing the authority of this prince, seconded the efforts of the Jews to apprehend Paul. The known relations of Aretas with Herod Antipas throw a little light upon this somewhat difficult statement of St. Paul.<sup>1</sup> How long Herod was faithful to the daughter of Aretas does not appear, but it is certain that Herodias, the sister of Agrippa and the ambitious and voluptuous wife of Herod-Philip his half-brother, captivated his affections when on a visit to him in Rome. I call him Herod-Philip: it is well known that his designation in Josephus differs from that of the synoptic narrative. In Mark vi. 17, he is described as Philip simply. If we take the text of Tischendorf and Alford, neither Matthew nor Luke mentions his name.<sup>2</sup> Josephus speaks of him as Herod the son of Mariamne the daughter of Simon.<sup>3</sup> The name Philip need not induce us, with the subjoined text of Josephus in our hands, to conjecture that he was identical with Philip the tetrarch of Iturea, Trachonitis, and Gaulonitis, who

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. xi. 32.

<sup>2</sup> Tregelles preserves, in Matt. xiv. 3, the name Philip, but expunges it from Luke.

<sup>3</sup> *Antiq.* xviii. 5. 1. "When Herod the tetrarch was once in Rome, he lodged with Herod, who was his brother indeed, but not by the same mother; for this Herod was the son of the high priest's daughter."



was the son of Herod the Great by Cleopatra of Jerusalem.<sup>1</sup> It is true that Jerome, in his commentary on Matthew xiv., confounded these two Philips; but this is not remarkable, seeing the exclusion from the will of Herod the Great of the son of Mariamne, in consequence of her complicity in the plot to poison him.<sup>2</sup> The obscurity of Herod-Philip I.,<sup>3</sup> and his non-appearance in political life, may account for the supposition that the Philip of Mark's Gospel was the tetrarch of Iturea. There is really no greater difficulty in the coexistence of two Philips in the family of Herod, than in the similar concurrence of the names of Antipas and Antipater.

It is not so easy to determine the date of the celebration of the marriage of Herodias with Herod Antipas. The divorce of the Arabian princess, and Herod-Philip's divorce of Herodias, must have preceded this event. The intention of Herod became known to the daughter of Aretas in time for her to escape to the castle of Machærus. This fortress is stated by Josephus to have been at that time subject to her father.<sup>4</sup> But he also tells us that Machærus was the scene of the imprisonment and execution of "John that was called the Baptist."<sup>5</sup> Consequently, during the whole of that period, it must have belonged to Herod, and not to Aretas. This makes it appear probable that the solemn injunction of John addressed to Herod—"It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife"—may have been addressed to the pro-

<sup>1</sup> *Antiq.* xvii. 1. 3. See Luke iii. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Basnage thought and argued that Josephus was mistaken in speaking of Herod-Mariamne as the husband of Herodias, endeavouring to prove that he died before his father. But see Lardner, *Credibility*. Part I. book ii. c. 5.

<sup>3</sup> *B.* Ƴ. i. 30.

<sup>4</sup> *Antiq.* xviii. 5. 1.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* xviii. 5. 2.



fligate prince between the secret espousal and the marriage. Herod's great desire was to keep the matter secret, and hence, before his visit to Rome, he shut up John in Machærus. It is possible that the disgraceful compact was somewhat delayed by the interposition of John; and not until the grand banquet at which the fate of John was sealed, was the public announcement made to the lords and chief estates of his realm of his adulterous and incestuous relations with Herodias. Shortly afterwards Machærus must have fallen into the hands of Aretas,<sup>1</sup> and there, where the blood of the martyr had been shed, means were taken by the father of the outraged wife to revenge the insult offered to her by her husband. The reprisals were severe. Aretas and Herod had other grounds of disagreement as to the boundaries of their respective dominions, but the marriage of Herodias was the ostensible cause of war between them. Through the treachery of some fugitives the whole of Herod's army was cut to pieces. Herod, grieved and angry, wrote to Tiberius and secured his sympathy. It came in the shape of an order to Vitellius, the governor of Syria, to make war upon Aretas, and give him no quarter. Before this raid upon Idumæa and Northern Arabia was effected, great changes occurred. Vitellius was prevented, by the fanatical opposition to the images which the Jewish populace displayed, from marching through Judæa, and with Herod Antipas visited Jerusalem, to do ceremonial honour to Jehovah in the

<sup>1</sup> It may have previously come into his hands, and have been wrested thence by Herod after the escape of his first wife and his marriage with Herodias. See, on the other hand, the elaborate dissertation of Gresswell on the "date of the marriage of Herodias." *Gresswell's Dissertations*. App. Diss. X. Vol. iii. 413, ff.



Herodian temple. Pilate was recalled, the high priest Annas deposed. Tiberius died, and the power to make war on Aretas was withdrawn or suspended. With the fall of Tiberius and the accession of Caius Caligula, the fortunes of Herod Antipas were strangely changed. His jealousy could not endure the extraordinary elevation of his nephew and brother-in-law Agrippa to the royal dignity, and he endeavoured, at the instigation of Herodias, to attain from Caius a similar honour. The result of his ambitious project was his political extinction. Thus, within a few years of the transactions in which they occupy this conspicuous position on the pages of the evangelic narrative, Pilate, Herod, and Herodias were dragging out a miserable existence in exile.

#### § 6.

It is in connection with this breach between Herod Antipas and Aretas, that the famous passage referring to John the Baptist occurs in Josephus. An important testimony is thus given to the historical position and public character of John, which is independent of any statement contained in the Gospel narrative. It is introduced without any admission of the higher functions of John, and simply because his conduct and fate were supposed to have some political reference. The passage is as follows :—

“ It seemed to some of the Jews that the army of Herod had been destroyed by God, who was thereby very justly punishing or chastising him by way of retribution for JOHN called THE BAPTIST. For Herod killed him, who was a good man, and exhorted the Jews by preaching virtue, and by cultivating righteousness towards one another, and piety towards God, to assemble for baptism ; for thus the baptism would be (appear) acceptable to Him, when they made use of it, not for the remission of certain sins, but for the purification



of the body, inasmuch as the soul had been sanctified beforehand by righteousness. When many others had rallied round him—for they were greatly excited by listening to his words—Herod fearing lest his great influence over them might lead to a rebellion or revolt—for they seemed to act in all things according to his advice—thought it much better, before any revolutionary movement issued from him, to seize and put him to death, rather than to fall into trouble and repent when the change had occurred. And he, owing to the suspicion of Herod, was sent bound to Machærus, the fortress before mentioned, and there put to death. It seemed to the Jews that destruction befel the army by way of retribution for him, God being angry with Herod.”<sup>1</sup>

The discrepancies between this narrative and that of the Gospels consist simply in the circumstance that they severally mention certain matters which are peculiar to themselves, and each suffers by omission. They do not contradict each other. The record of the principal event is more detailed by the Evangelists than by Josephus. The private pique and personal resentment felt at John’s reproof of Herod’s vicious habits and intentions, are distinctly given as the occasion of the imprisonment, and the vehement hatred of Herodias is made the occasion for his execution. It is perfectly compatible with this, that if

<sup>1</sup> Fl. Josephi, *Opera Omnia*. Tom. iv. 158. [Oxford Ed. 1720.] *Antiq.* xviii. 7. 2. Of the genuineness of this passage in Josephus there is no question. It is quoted by Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* lib. i. cap. 2, who, moreover, refers it to the 18th Book of the *Antiquities*. It is quoted by Origen contra Celsum, i. § 47, in the following words: “I would like to say to Celsus, who represents the few as accepting, somehow, John as a Baptist, who baptized Jesus, that the existence of John the Baptist baptizing for the remission of sins is related by one who lived no great length of time after John and Jesus. For in the 18th Book of his *Antiquities of the Jews*, Josephus bears witness to John as having been a Baptist, and as promising purification to those who underwent the rite.”—*Ante-Nicene Library: Works of Origen*, vol. i. p. 447. Jerome, *de Vir. Ill.* c. xiii. [Ben. Ed. 1706; *Hier. Opera*. Tom. iv. pt. 2, p. 107; Cat. Script. Eccl.], also makes reference to the same passage and its contents. “Hic in decimo octavo Antiquitatum libro manifestissime confitetur, propter magnitudinem signorum Christum a Pharisæis interfectum: et Johannem Baptistam vere prophetam fuisse, et propter interfectionem Jacobi Apostoli, dirutam Jerosolymam.



Herod's violation of the law had excited the indignation of John, the tetrarch might fear the influence of the prophet with an excitable populace, and be anxious to prevent the outbreak of sedition during his visit to Rome, by deporting him from the scene and shutting him up in prison. Josephus mentions Machærus as the fortress where the imprisonment and death of the Baptist took effect. I reserve the discussion of this subject for its proper position in my narrative.

This is not the place in which to discuss the nature of John's baptism. It is enough to say here, that independent evidence exists to the effect that a certain man, good, virtuous, and brave, in the days of Antipas tetrarch of Galilee, was an uncompromising moralist, acquired great influence over the people, demanded from them virtue, mutual fidelity and piety towards God, and recommended them to seek baptism at his hands, and thus to secure certain religious advantages by a more simple process than that which had been the immemorial and Pharisaic custom. We know, further, that for some political reasons, and in consequence of his power over the people, Herod imprisoned and executed this man, and that the Jews regarded the punishment of Herod's caprice and tyranny as an event of evil omen. Thus much we should have learned if there had been no New Testament.

We are not left without other testimony to the same effect. Thus:—

*Josippon*—called Josephus Gorionides or Joseph Ben Gorion—a Jewish writer of the ninth or tenth century, who, though he personated Flavius Josephus, and endeavoured to palm off his Hebrew chronicle as a much



more ancient and valuable work than it really was, had undoubted access to Jewish as well as to Christian literature.<sup>1</sup> He professed familiarity with the writings of Nicolas of Damascus, Strabo, Livius, Cicero, with Jewish histories since lost, and national traditions which have been transmitted orally, the Alexandrian library, &c., &c.; but he unintentionally revealed the forgery which he practised by many fictions and blunders, and by speaking of later nations and countries, *e. g.*, of Danes, Turcomans, and Goths, of emperors, popes, and bishops. It is however certain that this remarkable work, with its numerous interpolations and imaginative clothing of the skeletons of the past, reveals a certain source of Hebrew tradition, which Steinscheider describes as the “offshoot from the fully developed *Midrash* of Arabian and Latin literature.”<sup>2</sup>

Josippon does not allude to Jesus Christ or to James the Just, but he does refer to John the Baptist in the following terms, which in two or three respects are more in harmony with the evangelic tradition than the often quoted passage from Josephus:<sup>3</sup>—“Herod married the wife of his brother Philip, while his brother was still living, although she had children by his brother: he, I say, positively married her. But he put to death many wise men in Israel. He even slew

<sup>1</sup> See Lardner's Works, vol. vii. p. 162, ff., *Jewish Testimonies*, c. vi.; where the opinions of Scaliger, Fabricius, Gagnier, Basnage, on the character of Josippon's work, are recited and compared.

<sup>2</sup> See Dr. Ginsburg's notice of Josippon in *Kitto's Cyc.* Vol. ii. 661.

<sup>3</sup> Lardner. Vol. vii. 119. “Ipse accepit uxorem Philippi fratris sui adhuc viventis in uxorem, licet illa haberet filios ex fratre ejus; eam, inquam, accepit sibi in uxorem. Occidit autem multos sapientes Israel. Occidit etiam Jochanan sacerdotem magnum ob id quod dixerat ei: ‘Non licet tibi accipere uxorem fratris tui Philippi in uxorem.’ Occidit ergo Jochananem Baptistam.”—Josipp. sive Josephi Ben Gorionis, *Hist. Jud.* Lib. sex, ex Hebræo Latine vertit, J. Gagnier, 1706. lib. vi. cap. 63, p. 274.



Jochanan, the chief priest, because the latter had said to him, 'It is not lawful for thee to marry thy brother Philip's wife.' Therefore he slew Jochanan the Baptist."

In this short passage, Josippon attributes to John the Hebrew modification of his name, the title of Baptist, his family rank (*magnus sacerdos*), and his well-known personal character (*sapiens Israel*). He also assigns the specific cause of his death, and this in perfect harmony with the language of the Gospels. Moreover, he helps to preserve the tradition that Herod, the son of Mariamne, had also the name of Philip. It must be admitted that Josippon made serious blunders as to the history and chronology of Herod's reign, and he may have blended here the information given by Josephus, with a few hints derivable from the Gospels; but it is more than probable, from his general silence with reference to Christian history, that the origin of his statement is independent of these sources. If so, it is a secondary testimony to the historical position of John.

Other sources of information fail us here as they do in the case of the history of our Lord. We have no contemporaneous records beyond those which are furnished in the four Gospels. The Apocryphal Gospels and the Koran represent the growth of the legendary element, to which we shall subsequently refer. However, notwithstanding very striking external parallels with the outline of the life and death of Jesus, the mythopœic faculty has not engendered a cycle of miracles around the simple story, nor has it given to *John* the honours of virgin birth or resurrection glory. This is more remarkable if the mythical hypothesis be a correct



exposition of the evangelic narrative, because there are indubitable traces of the existence of a community of John's disciples long after his death, even if the Christians of St. John, confounded with the Sabeans and Mendeans of Oriental history and travel, are proved to have no historic relations with the great prophet of the wilderness.

It may be said that any distinct community of John's followers extinguishes the value that has been set upon the testimony of Josephus to the historical validity of John's position; that if the evangelic narrative represents the religious side of John's character, and also his relations with Jesus, he himself and all his followers ought to have been absorbed in the Christian community; that he must have been the most famous and the noblest of the disciples of Jesus; and that the narrative is inconsistent with itself. This, however, though practically assumed, is not the language of the New Testament. Careful investigation of the numerous references it contains to the memory, work, and testimonies of the Baptist, are all a comment on the words of Jesus, "He that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he." If, however, the prolongation of the direct influence of John were much greater than it proves to be, we must remember that the prolongation of the influence of that which is essentially temporary is part of the imperfection of our nature. If an impression has to be made upon humanity, deep enough to secure with certainty a temporary result of great importance, it is always found too deep to be erased when that result is accomplished. The subsequent appearance of the disciples of the Baptist, while confirming the historical name and place of their



founder, is a type of all similar protractions of an exhausted method or doctrine or institution.

If this conservative disposition were not prevalent, alongside of the opposing tendency to expansion and change, no truth would be inviolable. If sound and healthy criticism were always able to destroy the life of that which had done its work, the progress of the human mind would be feverish, and would continually tend to exhaust itself. Every phase of truth has been a preparation in the minds of men for the phases of truth that were to follow it. For the majority of such truths there has only been a temporary need. For the majority of human institutions there has only been a temporary requirement. They have had to make way for those that came after them. If those who have been gazing through the blinding mists of earth to the veiled face of truth had always had the virtue, courage, and self-sacrifice to say that they had not grasped the eternal, absolute, and objective reality, it is more than probable that they would never have conceived the ideas necessary to the development of truth with sufficient energy to have secured even the temporary ends assigned to them by Divine Providence.

On the other hand, it must not be forgotten, that with temporary and changing forms of thought and institution, there have been often intermingled absolute changeless truths which were never meant to pass away. Criticism, in assailing the obstructive and transitory form of some life-giving ideas, has not infrequently aimed at the destruction of that which is imperishable. Its delicate weapons have thus been often shivered against the hidden adamant, and so some parasitic untruth which it was competent to cut away



has taken a new lease of its life. Thus Mosaism, Prophetism, Priestism, Asceticism, Hierarchies, schisms of all kinds, and philosophies and scepticisms of many a name, have all one by one had valuable work to do. They have been links in the chain of human progress. Each in its turn has had to surrender much of its external form to make way for other and nobler forms of life ; yet each has had an eternal truth underlying it, which criticism, to its own infinite damage, has lost sight of in its eager haste to remove the obnoxious and obstructive form. This has been most signally the case with the Johannine dispensation. The world in every generation must hear from prophetic lips God's condemnation of sin. A moment comes to every man when the *VOX CLAMANTIS* must sound in his ears, and the kingdom of God on earth is ever needing the revival and realization of which John was the messenger. Never more than now did the Church need the cry, "The Bridegroom cometh."

In like manner the eternal truth and divine life of Christianity itself have been confounded with some of its temporary modes of expression, and criticism in its haste to be rid of dogmatic intolerance is often running the risk of utter suicide.

We see both tendencies at work in our own day. Many of the strictly temporary elements in the older dispensation, many of the transitory features of the Baptist's ministry have been preserved almost intact within the doctrines and institutions of Christendom. These have been fungous in their growth and deadly in their diffusive influence ; against them the spirit of the gospel is a protest. Useful, imperatively necessary as they were, they have cumbered the ground. They



have outlived the necessity for their own existence, they must be tenderly removed out of the way of the new and heavenly life. But they must not be roughly uprooted and crushed; there is divine life wondrously intertwined with them. In rooting out the tares, the wheat may be easily sacrificed. There is indeed a vast element of this older revelation which is divine and eternal, and which was meant to be re-embodied in new forms. There are abiding elements in the ministry of Moses, of Aaron, of Isaiah, and John, which cannot yet be dispensed with. The Christ has still the Law, the Promise, the Prophet, the Elijah, to prepare His way. It is my aim to discover and discriminate these tendencies.



## LECTURE II.

*EXAMINATION OF THE BIBLICAL RECORD OF  
THE NATIVITY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST.*







## LECTURE II.

### EXAMINATION OF THE BIBLICAL RECORD OF THE NATIVITY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST.

THE introduction of the first man into the world, whether we accept ancient traditions, modern science, or speculative philosophy, as the best representation of the grand phenomenon, was an event of transcendent interest, a dividing line between the eternities. God had thenceforward a living image, a possible companion and spectator, an object on whom love might be lavished, and an agent through whom His eternal purposes and designs might be effected. All, therefore, that heralded and prepared his way, all the prophetic anticipations of his mental and moral qualities, which the sagacity, ingenuities, and instincts of earlier races revealed, were charged with consummate interest to the student. It is not presumptuous to believe, on high authority, that in the "beginning of His way" God's delight was with the sons of men, and that He rejoiced in the habitable parts of His earth.<sup>1</sup> From the moment of the appearance of man upon the stage of being, from the time of that convulsive conflict and frustration of ideal involved in the outcome of moral

<sup>1</sup> Prov. viii. 30, 31.



probation, a process of preparation and education of the whole race was going on, which eventually issued in the appearance of the Second Man, the Lord from heaven, "God manifest in the flesh."

The "moments" of this preparation are the epoch-making men, events, and days of human history. The theologies of Egypt and India, the ceremonial of Assyro-Babylonian worship, the blending of Oriental dreams and Greek logic at Alexandria, the Buddhist asceticism, the Confucian morals, the diffusion of the Greek language and the constitution of the Roman empire, formed an integral portion of the one purpose of God, closely allied with the selection of a particular people to receive the Hope of the world. We have to deal with only a small portion of this vast subject, that which refers to the special national preparation for the Second Man. The Christology of the Old Testament has frequently been discussed with conspicuous erudition, and often criticised with keen-eyed jealousy. The typology of the early Scriptures has formed the theme of extended meditations and of comparisons (often more ingenious than sound) with the institutions of the New. The effect of these ideas upon Jewish literature and society, as well as upon the currents of contemporary opinion, has often been pondered: the present is a much more modest task than that of reviewing these learned and oft-repeated labours. Many of them are more or less involved in that which it is here proposed to do, but my simple aim will be to pourtray in concrete form the prophetic anticipation of the Christ, to study such elements as are involved in the "fore-runner" of the Second Man. It is my purpose to study the career of one who did more than all the



prophetic men and types of his people accomplished, to render the idea of the Christ, and of His work, conceivable to mankind. Sacred and secular history alike warrant us in sitting at the feet of one who gathers into himself the various elements of this millennial preparation for the Saviour, and who in one grand figure represents the sages of the East, and the prophets, priests, and rulers of his own people in all their conscious and unconscious preparation of the way of the Lord.<sup>1</sup>

Before proceeding to our task we are confronted with a page of biblical record which critics of a certain school of history unhesitatingly reject as legendary and as comparatively valueless. The supernatural element involved in it, is sufficiently strong to throw some suspicion on the historic validity of the narrative, and the intertwining of the nativities of John and Jesus has for some minds enveloped both in a haze of mystery and myth. We must therefore pay attention to the special difficulties which have been felt by some writers as to the validity of this chronicle.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Sermons du Père Bourdalouë, de la Compagnie de Jésus, pour les Fêtes des Saints.* — Tome premier, Paris, 1712. *Sermons pour la Feste de Saint Jean Baptiste*, pp. 379, 380. "De plus, dans l'ordre des divins decrets le temoignage de Saint Jean estoit necessaire pour l'establissement de nostre foy. Car le mesme Evangeliste qui nous apprend que Jean est venu pour rendre temoignage à la lumière, *Ut testimonium perhiberet de lumine*, en rapporte aussi-tost la raison; *ut omnes crederent per illum*, afin que tous crussent par luy. D'où il s'ensuit que nostre foy, je dis nostre foy, en Jésus Christ, est donc originairement fondée sur le temoignage de ce grand Saint, puisqu'en effet c'est par luy. que nous avons cru, par luy que la voye du salut nous a esté premièrement revelée, en un mot par luy que nous sommes chrétiens."

<sup>2</sup> Thus Grätz, *Geschichte der Juden*, Band. iii. p. 219, dismisses in the following words the whole narrative:—Speaking of John, he says: "Seine Jugendgeschichte dass er der Sohn eines Priesters Zacharias gewesen, welchen die betagte Frau Elizabeth ihrem ebenfalls alten Gatten geboren, und dass er aus der Priesterklasse Abia gewesen, sowie andere seiner Geburt vorangegangenen und nachfolgenden Wunder sind spätere Dichtungen; das einzig Geschichtliche in dieser Darstellung ist wohl der Zug, dass Johannes ein Naziräerleben geführt, d. h. zu den Essäern gehört hat."



It is admitted that the first chapter of the third Gospel is the only available testimony to the facts that are there said to have occurred. The legends of the *Protevangelium Jacobi* and of the *Koran* do not augment the evidence in our possession, nor increase our confidence in Luke's Gospel of the infancy. Sundry mythical adornments of the nativities of John, of Mary, and of Jesus, did doubtless arise among Christian believers of the second and third centuries, which associated themselves with later forms of the narrative.

Our first inquiry is as follows :—Is the first chapter of the third Gospel an integral portion of that document, or is it not? If it could be thrown off from the body of the third Gospel as a spurious addition, and if it came to us solely on its own merits, as a very ancient and independent fragment, then the supernatural element introduced into it, the lyrical effusions that abound in it, and the extraordinary mental elevation of the humble personages described by the chronicler, might well make us pause before admitting the historical character of the transactions it records. If, however, this document can be shown to be an integral part of the most finished and elaborate book in the New Testament; if it can be maintained that he who has preserved it for us is none other than he who [παρηκολουθηκότι ἄνωθεν πᾶσιν ἀκριβῶς] traced up accurately all matters to the fountain head, and who wrote his entire book on the authority of “eye witnesses and ministers of the word,” and who did this in order to supply certainty concerning those things which even before he wrote his Gospel were confidently held, and had also formed the matter of “catechetical”<sup>1</sup> instruc-

<sup>1</sup> Luke i. 1-4 : ἵνα ἐπιγνῶς περὶ ὧν κατηχήσῃς λόγων τὴν ἀσφάλειαν.



tion in the early community; then the value of this first chapter is greatly enhanced, and the trustworthiness of the whole narrative is less open to cavil. It then becomes part of a record which in other places does not shrink from the supernatural, the proem of a unique life in which the manifestation of superhuman excellencies and powers seems not only not incredible, but antecedently probable. We shall have to examine this record in detail and judge it on its own merits, and we shall do so knowing that any proof of its untrustworthiness or mythical origin will reflect discredit on the whole Gospel. Without allowing this consideration unduly to influence our judgment, it is obvious that a portion of a famous historical treatise carries with it more weight than an isolated fragment can do. Now the only strong objection ever taken to the integrity of the Gospel, turns on the non-existence of this passage in the proem of that used by Marcion, and which we have every reason to believe was a mutilated form of the third Gospel.

It is well known that Marcion, who was a contemporary of Justin Martyr,<sup>1</sup> and who visited Rome between 130 and 140 A.D., did make use of one Gospel, which he called "the Gospel of Christ." He did not recognize St. Luke as its author. His dogmatic purpose was abundantly apparent in the selection he made of this Christian document, and in his mutilation of its contents to suit his purpose. The fourth book of "Tertullian *adv. Marcionem*" is an elaborate attempt to prove the motive and the extent of the mutilations of Luke's Gospel effected by Marcion. It was contrary to the philosophical hypothesis of Marcion that Christ

<sup>1</sup>*Apolog.* i. c. 26. 58.



should have had a human parentage or genealogy, that He should have been circumcised, baptized, or tempted ; and it is not remarkable that, seeing he excised other portions of the Gospel which contradict his views, he should have repudiated the first and second chapters, as well as such portions of the third and fourth as refer to facts which contradict his theory.

With considerable, though profitless ingenuity, Ritschl<sup>1</sup> and Baur<sup>2</sup> have attempted to argue, from those passages of Marcion's Gospel that have come down to us in the writings of Tertullian and Epiphanius, that this document, instead of being a mutilation and modification of Luke's Gospel, was the original material which some later hand had expanded into the canonical third Gospel. Baur defends the position of Ritschl, and argues at great length in favour of the originality of the text of Marcion, on the ground of the omission by Marcion of passages, which, as he says, disturb the sense. It is curious that these omitted passages, according to the showing of both critics, almost uniformly contain some reference to the Old Testament, and the deference paid to it by our Lord. This was contrary to the intense anti-Judaism of Marcion, and there were obvious reasons in his Gnostic dogmatism for the mutilation of the original text. Baur supposes that Marcion's text and the canonical Luke are both of them modifications of an original text which has not come down to us. It is not improbable that some peculiarities of Marcion's text, where no dogmatic prejudice has influenced him, represent a genuine

<sup>1</sup> *Das Evangelium Marcions und das Kanonische Evangelium des Lucas.* 1846.

<sup>2</sup> *Kritische untersuchungen über die Kanonischen Evangelien.* pp. 397-424.



form of the original text of Luke, and when sustained by other quotations and any valuable manuscripts, may possibly represent the true reading. As we have said, Marcion's Gospel is destitute of the first three chapters of Luke's Gospel. After quoting a portion of Luke iii. 1, it proceeds abruptly to chapter iv. 31. It opens thus: "In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, God<sup>1</sup> came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and was teaching on the Sabbath day." Very numerous other omissions and mutilations are notified by Tertullian,<sup>2</sup> and explained from the theological position of Marcion.<sup>3</sup> The speculation of Baur has, according to Dr. Davidson,<sup>4</sup> been absolutely refuted by Volckmar, and therefore all arguments built upon the supposed higher antiquity of Marcion's Gospel are rendered valueless. With them disappears the prejudice against the first two chapters, which were supposed to be in themselves a completed poem added by a later hand to the original fragment of Marcion. The doubt felt with reference to the first chapter, if based on Marcion's reticence, ought however to have been extended to the second, third, and part of the fourth chapter of Luke's Gospel, and would thus have covered portions where Luke is amply confirmed by the other Evangelists. It must be added that no question is raised by the condition of the text. These chapters are found in all the old MSS. which are of any value, and have recently been confirmed by the reading of the codices Sinaiticus and Zacinthius. There is, there-

<sup>1</sup> *Evangelium Marcionis ex auctoritate veterum monumentorum descripsit Augustus Hahn.* See Thilo's *Codex Apocryphus*, N. T. i. 401. Cf. Baur. p. 403.

<sup>2</sup> *Tert. adv. Marcionem.* Lib. iv. § 7-43.

<sup>3</sup> Westcott. *Introduction to Study of the Gospels.* Appendix D.

<sup>4</sup> *Introduction to New Testament.* 1868. Vol. ii. p. 51.



fore, not a shadow of diplomatic doubt thrown over the integrity of the third Gospel.<sup>1</sup>

Strauss, in the later editions of his "*Leben Jesu*," withdrew his previous statements on this subject. Schleiermacher<sup>2</sup> considered that the first chapter, from 5-80, forms a connected whole, and "was originally a little poetical work rather than a properly historical narrative." His reason was the completeness of the chapter, its poetical termination, its supernatural machinery, its rhythmical flow, and the lyrical effusions that enrich it. The slight difficulties in the apparently prosaic portions, as, *e. g.*, in the chronological details, seemed to him the result of the poetical exigencies of the writer. Thus the relative date of Mary's visit to Elizabeth, the length of her stay, the month named by the angel as that of Elizabeth's pregnancy, the birth of John from aged parents, the commencement and close of Zacharias' dumbness, the outburst of the inspired canticles at moments not peculiarly suitable to their utterance, have all been made to indicate an unhistoric character.

Strauss used the circumstances here described as an illustration of those psychological anomalies which reveal the handling of the mythopœic tendency and the presence of the non-historic element. Schleiermacher, falling back upon deliberate and well-meant fiction, attributes the whole poem, as he styled it, to

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Davidson says firmly: "It was once thought that the first two chapters, with the exception of the preface, were not written by the Evangelist. The only argument worth mentioning which was adduced against this portion is its absence from Marcion's Gospel. But Tertullian says that the same document wanted the third chapter, and the fourth as far as the thirty-first verse. Thus the argument proves too much. Besides, Marcion's Gospel was a mutilated copy of Luke's."

<sup>2</sup> *Critical Essay on the Gospel of Luke*, by Frederick Schleiermacher, pp. 20-29. Translated, with a preface by the translator. 1825.



some "Christian of the more liberal Judaizing school." He supposed the object to have been to bring over some unconverted disciples of John to Christianity, "by pointing out, on the ground of facts and of general tradition, John's real highest destination in his relation to Christ." This special conjecture is of course beyond the scope of demonstration. It is, however, encumbered with difficulties. The supposition is that the whole story was fashioned with a specific purpose to conciliate the disciples of John. Why then should the author invent the disparaging incident of the dumbness, which would be likely to excite unnecessary prejudice? The Judaizing Christian party would not be the class from whom one might expect the circumstantial account of the miraculous conception by the Holy Ghost of our blessed Lord. If the Judaizer believed in "the triumph and aggrandizement of the nation by the second coming of Christ"—though there is no hint whatever of a second coming—it is most extraordinary that in the songs of Mary and Zacharias not even the faintest suggestion should be given either of the hour of apparent overthrow, or of the facts of the crucifixion, the resurrection, the ascension, and the spiritual claims of the Christ. The writer, if fashioning these records by his poetic instincts, would scarcely have avoided all reference to the death and apparent extinction of both John and Jesus.<sup>1</sup>

Professor Mill drew some interesting parallels be-

<sup>1</sup> The theory of Keim as to the sources of Luke's Gospei, that an original Ebionite document was overlaid and interlineated by a disciple and friend of Paul, who is personally referred to in a variety of passages, which reveal a strong animus against the spirit of the twelve, bears in a very remote way on our present argument, and is nothing but a loose and plastic hypothesis which is utterly beyond demonstration. Keim, *Geschichte Jesu von Nazara frei untersucht und ausführlich erzählt*. Bde. i. p. 72. Eng. Tr. i. 100, ff.



tween the evangelic canticles contained in this chapter and the poetic utterances of the well-meaning forgers of the second and third centuries, and proved that in cases closely similar to that which Schleiermacher imagined to have taken place here, *ex post facto* allusions were frequently made ;<sup>1</sup> and, moreover, that the wish of the fabulist in detailing, *e.g.*, the miraculous nativity of Mary,<sup>2</sup> to associate it with other remarkable births in the Old Testament, is abundantly and diffusely explained. The same thing is evident in the earlier and more respectable Apocryphal Gospel entitled *Protevangelium Jacobi*. The same may be said of the "Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs," the writer of which was a Jewish Christian of the age of Hadrian. LEVI is represented as saying to his posterity, "A blessing shall be given thee and all thy seed, until the Lord shall visit all nations in the tender mercies of His Son for evermore. Nevertheless thy children shall lay hands upon Him, to crucify Him. And therefore have counsel and understanding been given to thee, that thou mayest give thy sons to understand concerning Him : for he that blesseth Him shall be blessed, but they that curse Him shall perish."<sup>3</sup>

Very numerous illustrations might be produced of the same kind of imaginary anticipation of issues and events which were known by the writer to have occurred, all of which form striking contrasts with the reticence of these evangelic canticles.<sup>4</sup> Each of

<sup>1</sup> *Observations on the Attempted Application of Pantheistic Principles to the Theory and Historic Criticism of the Gospel.* By W. H. Mill, D.D. 1855.

<sup>2</sup> *Evangelium de Nativitate Mariæ*, c. 3. *Evang. Apoc.* ed. Tisch. p. 108.

<sup>3</sup> *A.-N. Library*, vol. xxii. p. 23. Test of Levi, c. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Speaking of another portion of LEVI's testament to his descendants, in which the sorrows of Israel and the call of the Gentiles are clearly portrayed from the standpoint of the writer's experience, Professor Mill remarks, *l.c.*



these noble hymns presents a vivid picture of the blessedness of the new kingdom, without travelling out of the Old Testament region of thought, and without forestalling the cycle of events which, in the belief of the imagined fabulist, must subsequently have been of such transcendent interest to the supposed interlocutors.

Schleiermacher's ingenious supposition, to which we have already referred, is moreover hampered by the difficulty of time. From the triumphant Old Testament ring of the canticles, it is clear that they could not have been fashioned by a poetical Jew after the fall of Jerusalem, or during the terrible conflict with Rome; so that we are thrown back into the lifetime of the apostles for the composition of this chapter.

We are not careful to avoid the conclusion of Schleiermacher, that chap. i. 5-80 is a complete history in itself; that Luke, who professes to have traced accurately to the fountain-head the sources of his information, may have received it entire from Mary herself. She who uttered the Psalm "*Magnificat*" was surely capable, even judging from a purely human standpoint, of the idyllic and archaic beauty of the whole narrative, with

part ii. p. 49: "Moreover, he cannot avoid making the patriarch announce the calling of the Gentiles, and the supercession of his own descendants, in a far more precise and specific manner than we find those facts enunciated even in the most evangelical of the prophets. What was thus inevitable to this author, when ascribing to Levi the presentiment of truths so well known in their detail to himself, would have been doubly so to St. Luke, had his object been similar, namely, to supply to the immediate father of our Lord's precursor the sentiments proper to *his* circumstances and to the far closer contact with the same truths which the annunciation of his son's birth afforded *him*. It is impossible but that some detail analogous to those in the preceding extracts must have been imputed by the author of the mythus to Zacharias; impossible but that, as there, he must have inserted in the hymn some intimation of the literal Israel's rejection,—the excision from the actual blessings of the coming kingdom of those to whom it was especially proclaimed."



all the details of which she must have been intimately acquainted.

Schleiermacher had to invent a character whose subjective qualifications for the work of composing the first chapter of the third Gospel embrace all the leading tendencies of the sub-apostolic age. Strauss does little more than repeat and expand the perplexities into which Schleiermacher allowed himself to fall, in working out his main theory of the composite character of the third Gospel. Schleiermacher and Strauss were equally opposed to the rationalistic explanations which Paulus had given concerning the angel, and the dumbness and its cure; but while the former believed in a vague substratum of fact, and thought he had found out the well-meaning *falsarius* who had so long imposed on the credulity of the world, Strauss referred every peculiarity and each statement, with perhaps the exception of the name of the Baptist, to the myth-creating tendencies of the age, and involves the entire origin of the narrative in his "potent wreath of mist."

If we start from the hypothesis that no variation from the known laws of nature is conceivable or credible; if evolution from previously existing and recognized antecedents must explain every peculiarity of human affairs, then some explanation, such as that of Schleiermacher or Strauss, or even Paulus, may be required to interpret this portion of the New Testament. For believers in a living God it is not difficult to grant that there is a direct intermingling of the Divine and the human in the development of Providence, and that we have here the record of the birth of one who was destined to perform a conspicuous part in the revelation to mankind of the most momentous of all facts,



the most glorious of all personalities. The antecedent improbability of certain deviations from the ordinary career of mortals occurring under such circumstances, is not therefore great. To find impossibility in imagining such a direct exercise of the Divine will upon the human will as is here described, is only the misfortune of certain minds. In reviewing the narrative, we shall endeavour to determine whether the internal improbabilities are strong enough to invalidate the powerful evidence at hand to show that it is a genuine fragment of the apostolic age.

Scarcely any critic is prepared to deny that the conception and birth of John may have taken place, as Luke tells us, in the days of Herod the king. This unquestionably leaves a broad margin of thirty-six years ; but the narrative before us, by placing a brief interval between the birth of Jesus and that of John, limits the period of both events to the closing days of the reign of Herod. All that it concerns us here to know, is that before the death of Herod, which is well ascertained to have occurred before the Passover in the year A.U.C. 750,<sup>1</sup> it became the duty of a priest, Zacharias by name, to discharge in the temple of Jerusalem the function of the priestly class to which he belonged.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Wieseler's *Chron. Synopsis*, pp. 56, 57 ; Arnold, in *Herzog's Encyclopädie*, art. "Herodes ;" Ellicott's *Historical Lectures*, p. 63.

<sup>2</sup> The classes into which David originally divided the priests of his day were twenty-four in number : eighteen of these were of the family of Eleazar, and six only of that of Ithamar. The great difference between the two families may be partly accounted for by the slaughter of the sons of Eli and of the people who with them carried the ark into the camp (1 Sam. iv. 10). The arrangement of the several classes and the order they should follow were determined by lot (1 Chron. xxiv. 6). The first of the classes as decided by the lot was that of Jehoiarib, the last that of Maaziah, and the eighth that of *Abijah*. The order seems to be observed by Hezekiah (2 Chron. xxix. 25, 26) ; but during the captivity in Babylon, not only was the order interfered with, but not more than four of the twenty-four classes of priests could be found. Great numbers must



There is frequent mention of these orders or classes occupying for a week their place in the priest's office, the individuals of the class being chosen by lot for offering the morning and evening sacrifice, and the presentation of sweet incense before the Lord.<sup>1</sup>

The supposition that Zacharias was the high priest, though made by many eminent scholars, and sustained by the statement that he is represented as offering incense in the holy place, cannot be justified. The simple fact that he was of the class of Abijah is in itself enough to show that he was not the high priest, as this distinguished functionary was entirely independent of the succession of the orders, and was at liberty, without any casting of lot, to offer incense whenever he thought fit. But it can be proved that Simon, the

have been destroyed, and others must have chosen to remain in Babylon. The class of Abijah was not one of these four. They belonged to the children of Jedaiah, Immer, Pashur, and Harim (Ezra ii. 36-39; Nehem. vii. 39-42).<sup>\*</sup> In Nehem. xii. 17, where individual fathers are mentioned as priests that went up with Zerubbabel, Abijah's name occurs, and we learn that the twenty courses were reappointed with their old names under the authority of Nehemiah.

<sup>1</sup> The whole set of twenty-four courses would occupy twenty-four weeks, or one hundred and sixty-eight days, in the successive discharge of their duties. If the class of Jehoiarib could be known to be performing these functions at any one date, then one hundred and sixty-eight days, before or after that date, Jehoiarib's course or class would once more be found at the same duties. We know from the Talmud<sup>†</sup> that when the temple was destroyed, on the 9th of *Ab* in the year A.D. 70, or 823 A.U.C., the week was the week of Jehoiarib, and there are many subordinate reasons which make this traditional date reliable.—Jos. B. J. vi. 4. 5. 8. It is easy to calculate from this backward, and we should find in the year 748 that the course of Jehoiarib would be in office from the 16th-23rd of *Ab*, the course of Abiah from the 6th-13th of *Tisri*. This is in singular coincidence with the date for the conception and birth of Jesus arrived at by a variety of other independent calculations. Wieseler, l. c. p. 144, very nearly corresponds with Gresswell in his calculation as to the actual day of the departure of Zacharias from the temple.

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<sup>\*</sup> Jedaiah was the second, Immer the sixteenth, and Harim the third of the original courses. Pashur is probably the representative of Malchijah (1 Chron. ix. 12).

<sup>†</sup> Tract *תענית*, fol. 29. 1, quoted by Scaliger, Bengel, and Wieseler. See the latter, *Chron. Syn.* p. 141.



father of Mariamne (one of the wives of Herod), or Joazar, his son, and therefore the brother of Mariamne, was at this period enjoying the high priest's dignity.<sup>1</sup>

The incense offered by Zacharias was that which it was the function of the ordinary priest to present before the Lord in the daily service. The wife of Zacharias had a name signifying "the oath of Elohim," and it is not improbable that, in Hebrew fashion, the priest refers to the circumstance in the grand hymn with which he will be for ever associated.<sup>2</sup> The home of this priestly pair was in a "city of Juda," identified by Reland with the *Juttah* of Joshua xv. 55, and xxi. 16, which, though assigned to the priests, is not included among the lists of 1 Chron. vi. 57-59. Robinson has discovered its site, and entertains no doubt that the home of Zacharias can still be identified south of Hebron.<sup>3</sup>

In what way Elizabeth was related (*συγγενής*) to Mary, who is spoken of as of the house of David, cannot be determined with accuracy. We know that distinguished priests, like Aaron himself and Jehoiada, did

<sup>1</sup> Lightfoot, in his *Ministerium Templi*, gives the following as the list of the high priests, from Aristobulus onwards:—*Jesus*, the son of Faneus; *Simon*, the son of Boëthus, the father of Mariamne; *Matthias*, son of Theophilus; *Joazar*, son of Simon; *Eleazar*, appointed by Archelaus (*Antiq.* xvii. 6. 8. 15); *Jesus Joazar*, a second time during the taxing; *Ananus*, appointed by Cyrenius; *Ishmael*, by Valerius Gratus; *Eleazar*, the son of Ananus; *Simon*, the father of seven sons who all occupied the post; *Caiaphas*. Selden, *De Successione in Pontificio*, cap. xi.; Petavius, *De Doctrina Temporum*, lib. x. c. 55, quoted by Witsius, *De Vita Johannis Baptistæ*; *Miscellanea Sacra*, vol. ii. exerc. xv. p. 475. See also Smith's *Dict.*, art. "High Priest."

<sup>2</sup> אֵלִישָׁבֶעַ. *Ελισαβερ* was the name of Aaron's wife, which Strauss regards as sign of mythical handling. *Zacharias*, זַכְרְיָה, being interpreted, is "remembered by Jehovah." Compare Luke i. 72, 73.

<sup>3</sup> See Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*, art. "Juttah;" Robinson's *Biblical Researches*, vol. ii. 195, 628. Keim, l. c. Bde. i. p. 472; Ewald, *Christus*, suppose that Hebron was intended.



marry women of other tribes.<sup>1</sup> It is on a thoroughly Hebrew platform that the writer stands, when he tells us of this pair, "that they were both righteous before God, and walked in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord blameless." Similar language is used of Noah, Levi, and Job, and the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews deals in analogous terms with a great cloud of witnesses.<sup>2</sup>

If we may judge from the utterance of his deepest convictions, this gift of righteousness, this life of obedience, was deeply rooted in a holy faith. Zacharias believed in "the tender mercy of our God, through which the Branch of Light should irradiate those sitting in darkness and the shadow of death." Reconciled with the will of God, he looked *through* the portentous signs of the times to their hidden meaning. He knew that it was only in the fulfilment of the promises made to the fathers, in the covenant made with Abraham and his seed for ever, in the accomplishment by some unexpected means of the hopes of his mysterious race, that deliverance and salvation would come to Israel. The old sources of consolation failed him. The house of prayer was gorgeous enough to gratify any national vanity, but it was being adorned by a heartless sycophant of Rome, and gilded by a despot's gold. The yearning must have been intense—as it is now, though in somewhat different circumstances—that the Lord Himself might come suddenly to His temple, and thoroughly purge its floor from the corruption of the times. Coupled with the desire of offspring, and the long and now hope-

<sup>1</sup> Exod. vi. 23 ; 2 Chron. xxii. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. vi. 9 ; Deut. xxxiii. 8 ; Job i. 8 ; Heb. xi. 2, 5, 7, 33. Prolix and elaborate dissertations on this statement may be seen in Drusius, *De tribus sectis*, i. 11. See also Witsius, l. c. 481.



less disappointment of that desire, it is not unreasonable to suppose that he should with prayers and tears have sought to be associated in some, as yet unknown, way with the development of the kingdom of God.

Strauss pointed scoffingly to the similar stories of Old Testament heroes being born of aged and barren parents. The births of Isaac, of Samuel, and of Samson, with their attendant circumstances, are thought by him to be the literary basis of this mythic representation of the birth of John. Schleiermacher<sup>1</sup> supposed that the author sought thus to bring his narrative into harmony with that of several heroes of Hebrew antiquity. Others have compared it with the supernatural conditions attributed in secular legend to the births of Buddha, Pythagoras, and Plato. Now it is very remarkable that no trace of this connection of thought appears on the surface of the narrative. No use is supposed to be made by the angel of this peculiarity of Old Testament history. Here the record of Luke differs materially from the tone of the Apocryphal Gospels.<sup>2</sup> In the Gospel of the "Nativity of Mary,"<sup>3</sup> the angel of the Lord is represented as removing the doubtfulness of Joachim, the father of the Virgin, by references to the Old Testament.

"Was it not the case that the first mother of your nation,—Sarah,—was barren until her eightieth year, and nevertheless, in extreme old age, she brought forth Isaac, to whom the promise was renewed of blessing to all nations. Rachel also, so favoured by the Lord, and so beloved by holy Jacob, was long barren, and yet she brought forth Joseph. . . Who among the judges was either stronger than Samson, or more holy than Samuel? and yet the

<sup>1</sup> Lib. cit. p. 28.

<sup>2</sup> Professor W. H. Mill. Lib. cit. p. 27.

<sup>3</sup> *Apocryphal Gospels: Ante-Nicene Library*, p. 54; *Evangelium de Nativitate Mariæ*; Tisch. *Evangelia Apocrypha*, p. 108.



mothers of both were barren. If then the reasonableness of my words does not persuade thee, believe in the fact that conceptions very late in life, and births from barren women, are usually attended with something wonderful" (c. 3).

This worthless story of Joachim and Anna, which is certainly of late origin, which exists only in the Latin language, and which was not accepted by the most credulous of patristic writers, works up some of the mythical narrative which had gathered round the persons of the father and mother of Mary, and dresses up into the long angelic harangue (part of which I have quoted) the sentiment which in the much earlier work called *Protevangelium Jacobi* was put into the mouth of Joachim himself, who is there said (c. 1) to have "called to mind how God, in his last days, gave to the patriarch Abraham his son Isaac." Now, upon Strauss' principle, it is very wonderful, that as the source of the myth is actually approached, there should be no indication given by the poet (to whom we are assumed to be indebted for the story of the birth of John) of any such association in *his* mind between the birth of the heroes of antiquity and the birth of the Baptist.<sup>1</sup> It appears to us that we have here nothing more than a simple narrative of an extraordinary fact, which is not, strictly speaking, supernatural, but which is another illustration of the way in which God chooses the weak and despised and forgotten things of this world to confound the strong and the famous.

When the week arrived for the course of Abijah to minister in the temple, Zacharias was chosen by lot to

<sup>1</sup> It is true he uses the phrase *προβεβηκότες ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις αὐτῶν ἦσαν*, which corresponds with LXX. description of Abram and Sarah. *Πρεσβύτεροι προβεβηκότες ἡμερῶν*. Gen. xviii. 11.



minister "before the Lord" according to the custom<sup>1</sup> of the priesthood.

Morning and evening the sweet incense was burned by the officiating priest. It seldom fell (so ran the Jewish proverb) to the same priest to perform these functions twice, so great was the number of those who competed for the honour;<sup>2</sup> for this was a highly-coveted and honourable duty, and, according to Jewish belief, provided an occasion when special communications were made by God to His servants.<sup>3</sup>

The whole multitude remained without in the open courts. As several of the priestly courses consisted of thousands of individuals, who were always present in Jerusalem or Jericho during their week of office, the crowd of worshippers may have been largely composed of the sacerdotal class, with a sprinkling of the laity. The word "multitude" suggested to Lightfoot<sup>4</sup> the idea that the day so memorable to Zacharias was the Sabbath. However this may have been, the silver trumpets were sounded, the smoke of the evening sacrifice ascended, the murmur of prayer from a thousand voices resounded through the gilded courts, and Zacharias went near to the altar of incense to present before the Lord the symbol of offered and answered prayer, to perfume the bloody sacrifice with holy fragrance. It is here that the narrative becomes specially crowded with difficulties. The cause of the antagonism

<sup>1</sup> *Karà τὸ ἔθος*, i.e., not according to law, but the arrangement originated by David for this purpose.

<sup>2</sup> Lightfoot, *Ministerium Templi*, cap. ix. § 5, describes the whole process and duties of the priest on this occasion.

<sup>3</sup> *Antiq.* xiii. 10. 3; *Hieros. Yoma*. fol. 42. 3. Simon the Just is said to have received from the lips of an angel, on the Great Day of Atonement, the prophecy of the time of his own death. Lightfoot, *Opera*, ii. p. 490.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* vol. i. p. 265.



and hostile criticism is the recorded appearance to the priest Zacharias of the angel of the Presence. The rationalistic school admitted the substratum of fact, but supposed that the aged priest, dizzy with incense and ecstatic with hope, mistook a gleam of light for an angel, and the murmuring of his own voice for the revelations of Gabriel. A cerebral attack, producing deafness and dumbness, followed his ecstasy, and was unexpectedly removed on the occasion of the circumcision. Schleiermacher thought it more probable that this strange story should have been invented by a poetical chronicler, than that any man should have committed so great a blunder. The fit of paralysis scarcely harmonizes with the obvious vigour of Zacharias in other respects. In the estimation of both Schleiermacher and Strauss, Paulus utterly failed by this explanation to free the narrative from a variety of other supernatural occurrences. Strauss especially urged that if the angelic appearance were removed from the narrative, yet enough remains on the ordinary natural basis to make the story improbable and inexplicable.<sup>1</sup> He considered the simple mention of the angelic appearance an unhistoric trait, and repudiated, as a worn-out or exploded hypothesis, the very conception of an order of heavenly or spiritual beings occupying some place intermediate between the highest God and His human creatures. Such beings do not and cannot come within the range of scientific observation: reason cannot assert their existence. If that is sufficient to condemn this narrative, we must be content to part with it and accept some of the various hypotheses that have been framed for the composition of the story. In accordance with

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Jesus*. E. T. Vol. i. pp. 100-108.



the motive I have in now dealing with this page of Scripture narrative as bearing on Christian theology, and introductory to the life of Christ, it is well to remember that our rejection, on such a principle, of the narrative of the birth of John, involves the repudiation, on the same ground, of part of the evidence of the resurrection of Christ as well as of many other passages of Scriptural revelation. The plea therefore deserves and demands inquiry.<sup>1</sup> Let me then premise that if reason and induction and scientific experiment cannot verify the existence of spiritual agencies, they cannot disprove their existence. This much is certain, that between man and the lowest forms of animal life and intellectual development, there is every conceivable gradation of being. An infinite series of weaker and less furnished intelligences comes into view, whose hold upon matter, and whose power of originating sensations and perceptions in us, vary all but infinitely. It is an unwarrantable conjecture that the human intelligence is the highest form of mind, and that the human and physical method of operating upon nature is the only method of such operations. It is unreasonable to assert that no personages higher than man exist, whose faculties of dealing with light and sound, with form and force, are fundamentally different from those which come under our daily experience. Belief in a personal

<sup>1</sup> See Steudel, *Die Theologie des Alten Testament*, pp. 215-239, where the idea of the "angel" in the Old Testament is carefully elaborated, as also the form of its manifestation in the apocryphal books. Joseph Langen, *Das Judenthum in Palästina zur Zeit Christi*, p. 297, ff. Hermann Schultz, *Alttestamentliche Theologie*, Band. ii. p. 129, ff., discusses the doctrine of the prophetic period concerning *Angels*, the broad and grand generality of the prophetic ideas, as embodied in Psalms, Job, and earlier prophets; and this is contrasted with the growing phantasy of the representations of the apocryphal books, p. 321, ff., including the whole hierarchy of "Watchers," or "Holy Ones" of Daniel and Henoch, as well as the "Angel" ideas of New Testament. Compare Reuss, *Théologie Chrétienne*, vol. i. p. 463.



God seems to favour the hypothesis that between His infinite and uncompounded being and our own, there must be a hierarchy of varied powers, a gradation of personal intelligences, who either perform or dispute His will. From the Pseudo-Dionysius<sup>1</sup> to our own day, this hypothesis has been proved liable to gross superstition and very varied development. The nature, orders, and functions of angelic beings must be matters of pure imagination, and the light thrown upon this subject by the holy Scripture is faint and flickering; yet we find enough there to bring our narrative within the category of a vast range of observed phenomena, possessing great interest and beauty. Strauss objected to the idea of "a graduated scale of created intelligences" as the substitution of a "modern notion" for the Jewish representation. This "modern notion" is only introduced when a negative modern speculation denies the credibility of such a class of beings. The "parallel representation" is a conjecture, and we frankly admit it; but it is no more conjectural than the dogmatism which denies the possibility of the angelic, supersensuous world. "Belief in angels," says Strauss, "has its source in the desire that the universe should contain a higher amount of intelligence than is realized in the human race, but which is now satisfied by a conviction that other worlds are inhabited as well as our own." But this conviction is at present nothing more than a conjecture, which does not rest upon a particle of evidence, and is quite as shadowy as is belief in the spiritual world itself. Let us not forget that with intuitive certainty we belong to the world

<sup>1</sup> For a clear and succinct account of the Areopagite's Angelology, see Milman's *History of Latin Christianity*, vol. ix. p. 57, ff.



of spirit as much as we do to that of sense. The discoveries of modern astronomy, the revelations of the telescope and spectroscope, are furnishing us with more accurate intelligence touching the forces and the chemical elements that are actively at work in the far-off stellar spaces; but while they proclaim thus the unity of the kosmos, they justify belief in the boundless forms of existence, whether physical or spiritual, with which the universe is charged. Strauss urged that effects previously ascribed to angelic beings can now be set down to natural causes, thus showing that belief in them is a lifeless tradition, since we have discovered the presence and universality of these causes. He ridiculed the idea of the throne of Jehovah as Micaiah saw it, with "all the host of heaven standing on his right hand and on his left," as importing into the region of pure thought, pagan mythological notions borrowed from the court of an oriental despot.

It is however tolerably clear that the Jewish mind, even in the visions of the fourth book of Esdras, or in those of the book of Daniel or of Henoch, or the Apocalypse, did not so blunder into mythology as to suppose that these exalted visions represented objective fact in some one portion of astronomical space. When the Hebrew spoke of the "arm," the "hand," the "voice," the "eye," or the "finger of God," he was not intending to convey the notion of the physical parts of the Most High, but of the moral perfections of His nature. In like manner, the idea of some central court or throne, surrounded by angelic presences after the manner of some great earthly potentate, was a genuine condescension to the weakness of man's understanding, not the revelation of an objective fact.



It is moreover ascertained, that in a vast number of passages of Holy Scripture, angelic ministry and manifestation are spoken of all but interchangeably with descriptions of the activity of the Divine Being. "The angel of the Lord" is spoken of as Jehovah Himself, and is distinguished from the created angel to whom at times He delegated His authority, but whom He discriminated from His own "presence."<sup>1</sup> There are many other passages of Holy Scripture where the various operations of the Divine hand, such as the creation of the world, the guidance and consolation of His people,<sup>2</sup> the giving of the law,<sup>3</sup> the Providence which smote the host of Assyrians,<sup>4</sup> and watches over the little child,<sup>5</sup> and encamps round about those who fear God,<sup>6</sup> the protection afforded to Elisha, the convoy of the deathless prophet to his heavenly home;<sup>7</sup> the consolation offered to the only-begotten Son in His agony,<sup>8</sup> the rolling of the stone from the door of the sepulchre, the deliverance of Peter and Paul from deadly peril, and the harvesting at last of the souls of the righteous,<sup>9</sup> are, though attributed to angelic personalities, undoubtedly methods of representing the exceeding activity of the Divine will and grace. God does indeed act through agents, but agents who are, from their absolute obedience and submission to His will, only<sup>10</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Gen. xxviii. 12 ; xxi. 17 ; xxii. 15, ff.    <sup>2</sup> Ibid. xlviii. 16.

<sup>3</sup> Acts vii. 53 ; Gal. iii. 19.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Chron. xxxii. 21 ; Isa. xxxvii. 36.

<sup>5</sup> Matt. xviii. 10.

<sup>6</sup> Psal. xxxiv. 7.

<sup>7</sup> 2 Kings ii. 11 ; vi. 17.

<sup>8</sup> Luke xxii. 43 ; xxiv. 4 ; Acts xii. 7 ; xxviii. 23.

<sup>9</sup> Matt. xiii. 39.

<sup>10</sup> Ezek. i. 12 : "Whither the spirit was to go, they went ; and they turned not when they went ; . . . and the living creatures ran and returned like as the appearance of a flash of lightning." Psal. ciii. : "Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening to the voice of his word ; . . . ye ministers of his that do his pleasure."



forms of His own agency. Special protection and guidance for nations were from very early times attributed to angelic powers. This was supposed, by the rabbinical writers, to be the meaning of Deut. iv. 19.<sup>1</sup> The sublime personage who wrestled with Jacob, and conferred upon him his new name, was described as "the angel which redeemed me from all evil," and referred to in Isaiah lxiii. 9 as "the angel of the presence." It is this same mighty agency which comes into such frequent prominence throughout the entire history of the chosen people; as "the angel of the Lord," when with drawn sword he arrests the career of Balaam;<sup>2</sup> as "Captain of the Lord's host," when he reveals special grace to Joshua,<sup>3</sup> and manifests himself as the deliverer of Israel to Gideon, Manoah, and David.<sup>4</sup> The Psalms frequently refer to the blessedness and security afforded by the presence of this wondrous power of God. Though the manifestations of the supernatural power were various, and came in different and wondrous ways into the consciousness of the people and prophets of God, they are all closely related to each other, they melt and blend into one grand conception. They are the λόγοι of the one eternal λόγος; they are modes of activity of the one Infinite and all Holy One. They were conceived by Philo to be the *ideas* of God Himself, constituting, indeed, when looked at in their totality, "the spiritual world," and all summed up in the sublime essence of the λόγος, but they are seldom referred to by Philo.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See quotation and discussion in Von Böhmer's art. "Engel," in Herzog's *Encyclopædie*.

<sup>2</sup> Numb. xxii. 22.

<sup>3</sup> Josh. v. 12-15.

<sup>4</sup> Judg. vi. 11-13; xiii. 8-23; 1 Chron. xxi. 15.

<sup>5</sup> See Langen, *Judenthum Zur Zeit Christi*, p. 305. Philo, *De Gig.* § 4, declares angels, "souls," "dæmons," to be convertible terms, and messengers between



As to their personality and their spirituality, it is impossible to doubt that Scripture is any less explicit. They are “ministering spirits.”<sup>1</sup> Their will is lost in the Divine Will, though it may be conceived of as spontaneously rendering an absolute and unchecked obedience. Yet they are all inferior to the only-begotten Son. When He is brought into the world, they worship Him;<sup>2</sup> they sing His advent; they announce His incarnation; they minister to His suffering flesh and broken spirit; they assist His triumph; they are the fulgurations of His power; they sound the great trumpet of His wrath; they are distinct from, though one with Him. The main difficulty of this biblical thought does not lie in the mere conception of the angelic world; indeed, it is almost impossible for the most materialistic mind to rid itself of some equivalent speculation. We cannot but think of the supreme and eternal Power in its separate manifestations. It is easier to imagine a delegation of the Divine Will to a variety of co-operating agencies in Nature, Providence, and History, than not to do so. The chief difficulty arises from lack of the proof of such existences. Our forefathers may have said that angels ministered to them, but how can the testimony of the senses determine the reality of such an event? Our limited experience will not permit us to deny the possible existence of such beings as those which Scripture describes as the personal activities of Jehovah. But it is certain that whatever violates the unity or the omnipre-

God and man—and in *De confus. ling.* § 35, and *De opific. mundi*, § 24, he refers to the companion-assistants of God in creation of the world. In *Fragm. Quæstiones*, i. in *Gen.* he said, πνευματικὴ δὲ ἡ τῶν ἀγγέλων οὐσία, but he nowhere asserted their distinct personality. Cf. Martensen, *Christian Dogmatics*, § 68. Clark's Trans. <sup>1</sup> Heb. i. 14. <sup>2</sup> Ibid. i. 6.



sence of God would be at variance with all just conceptions of the Hebrew religion and of biblical thought; nor are these revealed modes of the Divine operation open to this charge. The form in which they have come into consciousness is beset with difficulty. Still, in accepting the assurance of the agency of an angelic messenger, and even in believing that such a presence has been *seen* and *heard* by God's servants, we do not trespass very far beyond what we know of the intimate relation that subsists between our own spirits and the forces of nature. Our bodies are but the transient clothing of spirits, which under the force of the inner, supersensuous life, are ever rapidly vanishing into thin air. An angelic spirit makes a more curt and much easier use than we can do of the functions of matter in its most etherial form. When it has done its work, the decomposition and dissolution of the temporary form is immediate. All these angelophanies were surely anticipations of the ultimate adoption of our humanity by the Eternal Logos, and were manifestations of the Christ before He came in the flesh—the light shining in the darkness, before it came into the world.<sup>1</sup>

It may have required a peculiar state of mind to become conscious of so Divine a presence as that of the angel of the Lord. All eyes cannot discern the stars at midnight, to say nothing of midday. All men could not have seen what Jacob, or Joshua, or Zacharias saw, when the angel of the Lord appeared to them. Some may have their spiritual eyesight so sharpened as

John i. 5-9, 14. See Lange's *Das Leben Jesu*, vol. ii. p. 41, ff., "Der Engel Gabriel."



to see more of the unseen world than others do, even though these may not be blind to the presence of such manifested glory. Thus, when one angel has been seen by a mind prepared for such a manifestation, another might have perceived a multitude of the heavenly host. Such experiences, though corresponding in some degree to objective fact, must be determined more largely by subjective experiences than are the ordinary circumstances of life. On the other hand, it must not be forgotten that if the poet, the scientific explorer, the artist, the historian, the uneducated peasant, were to climb Olympus one after the other, they would in reality see such different objects, that, though in face of the same definitely objective facts, their independent experiences would be far from identical. Certainly there are many philosophic divines who, if they had been with Zacharias in the holy place of the temple, would have seen nothing but the curl of the incense, and heard only the murmuring of the praying crowd.

It may be asked,—If the higher spirits of the creation, those in such immediate union with God that they always do what pleases Him, are at all within the range of human consciousness, how can we account for the long waste of years during which, if the record of such appearance comes to us, we call it at once fictitious or romantic? Has not spirituality equal to that of Zacharias, or Mary, or the shepherds, often purified human hearts? Has not ecstatic trance, noble as that of the women who went to embalm the Lord, passed over holy women in lonely cells, in perilous hours, amid the excitements of martyrdom and sacrifice? Why then have not the ministering spirits made their glory and their unrequited service felt by these? Our



answer is, we are not certain that they have not! Be that as it may—and superstition and romance have told us many lies—it is not unreasonable to argue, that as the true Light has now dawned, and the real Sun has risen on the world; now that the strange eclipse of His beams is overpassed; now that the sorrows of His birth, the humiliation of His passion and His burial, the pang of His departure, the glories of His resurrection, and the troubles of His infant Church are over, there are deep reasons why the most striking of the spiritual manifestations of His grace should be made in a totally different region of human experience.

Some of the opponents of the biblical narrative urge that the angelology of the new Testament was a Persian tradition; that the names of the angels were the reflection of Zoroastrian influences; and that if they contain genuine revelations of great objective facts, we owe these to the Persian sages, and not to the holy people of God's covenant. How does the matter stand? The angel describes himself to Zacharias as *Γαβριήλ ὁ παρεστηκὼς ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ*.<sup>1</sup> Now Micaiah's vision, to which we have already referred, makes us familiar with "all the host of heaven standing by Jehovah on his right hand and his left."<sup>2</sup> A great angelic messenger describes himself to Joshua as "prince of the host of the Lord;"<sup>3</sup> and thus, long before the supposed date of what it has become the fashion to call the "Maccabæan Daniel," there was biblical phraseology which would justify the authenticity of Zacharias' revelation without calling in the aid of Persian mythology. Strauss and others quote Lightfoot's citation of Rabbi Simeon, to the effect that "the *names* of the angels

<sup>1</sup> Luke i. 19.    <sup>2</sup> 1 Kings xxii. 19-22; 2 Chron. xviii. 18-21.    <sup>3</sup> Josh. v. 13, 14.



ascended with Israel from Babylon ;”<sup>1</sup> that whereas in Isaiah we hear of one of the seraphim, in Daniel ix. and x. we hear of the “man Gabriel” and “Michael your prince.” Professor Mill justly remarks that this rabbinical writer only mentions an unquestionable fact, when he says that the names of these angels first occur in the book of Daniel and after the Captivity, but this is very different from the admission that the names were borrowed from the Pagan systems. The curious fact is that each of these celebrated names is pure Hebrew; it is neither Aramaic, Chaldæan, nor Zendic in its shape, having no relation to the Persian forms of thought or expression.<sup>2</sup> The often quoted passage from the book of Tobit (xii. 15), where another angel “Raphael” is introduced as “one of the seven holy angels, who enter in before the glory of the Holy One,”<sup>3</sup> is used by Strauss to prove that the number seven leans for its origin on the Persian representation of the seven *Amshaspands*, who, inclusive of Ormuzd, form the centre of the great dominion of light and glory. If such resemblance exists in the apocryphal Tobit, it does not appear in Daniel’s prophecy or in Luke’s Gospel. The book of Henoch names *six* of the angels of the presence, and speaks elsewhere of the *seven* stars, and in c. 40 adds to the *Michael*, *Raphael*, and *Gabriel* of Daniel and Tobit, the name *Fanuel*. The exceeding prevalence throughout the Biblical writings of the number seven, with its moral rather than its

<sup>1</sup> *Horæ Hebraicæ* in *Evang. Lucæ*. c. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Langen, l.c. p. 313, ff., discusses the different representations of the Book of Henoch, the Book of Jubilees, and Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, with reference to the angelic world.

<sup>3</sup> Ἐγὼ εἰμι Ραφαήλ εἰς ἓκ τῶν ἑπτα ἁγίων ἀγγέλων οἱ προσαναφέρουσι τὰς προσευχὰς τῶν ἁγίων καὶ εἰσπορεύονται ἐνώπιον τῆς δόξης τοῦ ἁγίου.



arithmetical significance, renders the supposition extremely gratuitous that a Hebrew writer should have borrowed the number seven from Persian sources. There are other uses of the number seven, and references in Zechariah and in the Apocalypse to "the seven spirits of God;"<sup>1</sup> and we are not wrong in attributing to Hebrew thought and to the Hebrew Scriptures, rather than to the Persian symbolism, the use of this peculiar digit and its multiples, to denote the perfection and fulness of Divine manifestation. Moreover, a comparison of various Jewish authorities shows that there was in the apocryphal and rabbinical literature no fixed number of seven archangels common to Jewish thought.

All that can be said with fairness or truth, is that the Hebrews during the Captivity did learn to give greater definiteness to their views of the angelic ministry, and to clothe in their own language, and not in that of their conquerors, some of these more definite thoughts. The *name* is but the human method of recording something thought believed and felt, and the significance of the name of Him who unfolds these

<sup>1</sup> Professor Mill, l.c. p. 58, quotes from *Pirke Rabbi Eliezer*: "There are four armies of angels of ministry, singing praises before the Holy and Blessed One. The first is the host of Michael, on his right hand; the second, that of Gabriel, on his left; the third, of Uriel, in front of him; the fourth, of Raphael, behind; and the (Shekinah or) glorious Presence of the Holy and Blessed One is in the midst." This account, making Raphael one of *four* attendant archangels (not, as in Tobit, one of *seven*), agrees with the older one of the Book of Enoch, which, as cited by Syncellus (*Chronograph*, p. 22), speaks of the four great archangels, Michael, Uriel, Raphael, and Gabriel. The corresponding text of the Ethiopic version of that book, chap. ix. 1, gives the names as it should seem corruptly, Michael, and Gabriel, and *Suriel*, and Uriel (though the name Raphael appears afterwards in chap. x. 4); and the translations of both De Sacy and Lawrence of the former place, inserting both Raphael and Suriel, make *five* archangels instead of four. Lawrence's *Book of Enoch*, pp. 7, 194, 206; and *Das Buch Henoch*, üb. v. Dillmann, who gives in c. ix. Surjân and Urjân for Suriel and Uriel, pp. 4, 83, 97.



deep secrets, and foretells these high destinies, is a witness to the preparation that was being made for a still higher, nobler, and fuller blending of the Divine and human in the person of Him who should fulfil the words of the heavenly messenger. The name of Gabriel signifying the man of God, or the God-man, reveals one of the most momentous aspects of the coming revelation. It is the human side of the Divine plan, it has to do with the definitely human form and accompaniment of the greatest of all revelations. But we are not careful to exclude the presence, either here or in other parts of Holy Scripture, of the foreign influences to which the culture and circumstances of the favoured people may have exposed them. It would argue supernaturalistic blindness, indeed, to fail to see the influence of Egyptian, Oriental, Greek, Roman, Essenic, Rabbinical thought in Holy Scripture. More than that, the fact that the mind of God has specially revealed itself to a certain succession of men in a particular nation, does not involve the denial of all other direct communion with God, nor necessitate the repudiation of all other revelations.

What was the precise objective fact which assumed this form in the deep conviction of the early Church, cannot be gathered from a few passages of Jewish or Christian literature ; but so grand a persuasion will not be demolished by merely comparing it with the angelology of Henoah or of the Zendavesta or of the Koran.

When the angelic vision broke upon Zacharias he was prostrated with fear. The soul of man does fear and tremble exceedingly when it draws near the realm or manifestation of pure spirit.<sup>1</sup> When his prayer was

<sup>1</sup> Gen. xv. 2, 12 ; Judg. xiii. 6, 22 ; Dan. x. 8 ; Matt. xiv. 26 ; Rev. i. 17.



on the point of being realized, he shrank from the method in which God called him into the secret purposes of His love. His fear was rebuked, and he was told that his wife should bear a son, but that his name should be called, not Emmanuel, or God with us, but John, or "Jehovah is favourable."<sup>1</sup> This child is to be a source of joy and gladness to his parents, and many shall rejoice at his birth (ver. 58, 66). He shall be great before the Lord, *i.e.*, in view of his spiritual functions. Like Samson of old, he is to be a Nazarite from his birth, and neither to drink wine nor strong liquor (*σίκερα*), and he shall be filled with the Holy Spirit from the hour of his birth.<sup>2</sup> A grand contrast is intended here, as in Eph. v. 18, between the sensational excitement which may be created, as in the Dionysiac rites, by alcoholic stimulus and pampering of the flesh, and the Divine energy given by the Spirit of God.<sup>3</sup> The full significance of this prediction of the angel will come before us subsequently. I may simply remark here, that though John should be born of priestly race, he would as a Nazarite stand to the sacerdotal order in a relation almost equivalent to that in which the priest stands to the rest of the nation, and as a

<sup>1</sup> This name was an old Hebrew form. יְהוֹכָנָן, Jehochanan, from יְהוָה and נָחַם, to be gracious or favourable. It is rendered by LXX. *Ιωανάν* in 1 Chron. iii. 24 and = *Ιωνα* 2 Kings xxv. 23; *Ιωαννης* 2 Chron. xxiii. 1. In *Cod. Vat.* here one of the "ν's" is elided *secunda manu*.

<sup>2</sup> *Ἐκ κοιλίας*, not *ἐν κοιλίᾳ*. The Catholic expositors, and Olshausen joins them, are eager to find here the communication of the Divine afflatus to the great forerunner while yet unborn. In this view Maldonatus refers to Origen, Cyprian, Cyril of Jerusalem, Ambrose, Maximus, Chrysostom, and others, and declares that the interpretation *ab infantia sua*, is only a gloss of the heretics. Cyprian, *e.g.*, Ep. lxxiii. [Oxf. ed. 25], speaks of "John filled with grace even in his mother's womb;" but see for the scriptural usage, Matt. xix. 12; Acts iii. 2; xiv. 8; Gal. i. 15; Psal. xxi. 10 (LXX.) and lxxi. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Bengel, in loco, says: "Similiter ebrietati plenitudo in Spiritu opponitur." Eph. v. 18.



prophet he should still further become conscious of a Divine commission and be burdened with the word of the Lord. The angel further assured Zacharias that he should turn many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God, and should go before the coming Lord (according to the prophecy of Malachi) in the spirit and power of Elijah. No metempsychosis was intended by this. It was not said that this child should be a second birth of the glorified Tishbite, but that he should do for that generation what Elijah did for his. He should have the spirit, and therefore the power to "turn the hearts of the fathers to the children;" not, as Kuinoel suggested, to bring the mind of the patriarchs to return to their posterity, nor exactly, as Augustine supposed,<sup>1</sup> that the sons should be taught to understand the law as their fathers, their prophets, even Moses himself included, had understood it; but rather that the fathers of the people should, under his powerful teaching, be turned in heart to the mass of the people from whom, by their ceremonial sanctity and traditional usages, they had separated themselves. Then, adding to the words of Malachi, the angel continued, "He shall turn the disobedient, *i.e.*, the unbelieving, sceptical, and unspiritual souls, unto the true wisdom of the righteous," and thus prepare a people for the Lord. The Lord was indeed drawing near, but His way was only in part prepared. The Divine powers of the ancient priesthood, the insight and thunder of the prophetic order, the vows and self-sacrifice of the Nazarite, must be once more recapitulated, and in a concentrated form made to bear

<sup>1</sup> *De Civitate Dei*. xx. 29. "Est sensus ut etiam filii sic intelligant legem, quemadmodum patres eam intellexerunt, id est prophetæ, in quibus erat et ipse Moyses."



upon the heart and society of Judaism. As Elijah at the head of a prophetic order had done for the kingdom of Israel what all the priests and Levites and ascetics of the olden time had failed to accomplish, so the harbinger of the Christ should bring forth into strong relief, and apply with irresistible force to the conscience of Israel, the significance and the purport of the Old Covenant.

Severe and hostile animadversion has been launched against this foreshadowing of a human life, even by the messenger of the holy God. The objection that such a preliminary sketch of a future life is an "outrage upon the human will," applies with still greater force to the hypothesis of any prevision of the future, even by the Infinite Mind. If the knowledge of the Creator is to be taxed as an outrage upon His creature, there is an end of theology, and a term is put to all religious thought and life. Assault upon a specific prophecy becomes frivolous when it proceeds from a writer who charges the very conception of prophecy as immoral. On the other hand, modern physical philosophy does something in this respect to modify the pride of dogmatic metaphysics. The thought of the eternal God cannot be limited by the conditions of time. The apparent contradiction involved in the term THE ETERNAL NOW is no greater than that of any other similar attempt to represent in thought the union of the infinite and the finite. The sublime expression of St. Peter, "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day," strains to express that fulness of knowledge which must embrace all seeming contingencies. "The arc of an infinite circle is a straight line," and this is



true how rigid soever we may try to make our definition of the circle or of the straight line. The foreknowledge by an infinite intelligence of the operations of a perfectly free will is in one aspect of it a blank contradiction in terms, but it is none the less impossible to refute the fundamental verity involved in it, if we adequately apprehend what we mean by such terms as infinite and eternal.

The doubt or difficulty felt by Zacharias himself has been the occasion of much speculation, especially considering that the subsequent infliction upon the aged priest is intentionally represented as a punishment. The notion of a self-imposed silence is contrary to the spirit of the entire narrative and to the meaning of the words.<sup>1</sup> The significance of the name assumed by the angel here deserves special remark. The probability is, as we have seen, that *Gabriel* means "man of God," or "God-man," and is introduced to set forth more clearly the functions of one who in earlier times<sup>2</sup> had proved himself to be the agent and manifestation of Divine love to Israel. He who had erewhile proclaimed the advent of the true Son of man will not now brook the vestige of unbelief. If heavenly promise falls thus on human ears, and additional sign is required of its truthfulness, that sign shall be the deafening of such unwilling ears, the fettering of such unwilling tongue. Because<sup>3</sup> Zacharias did not believe the angel's words, he must thus learn the danger of his cavil and his

<sup>1</sup> They are threefold. Ver. 20, *σιωπῶν ἔσθ' μὴ δυνάμενος λαλῆσαι*, repeated in ver. 22, *οὐκ ἠδύνατο λαλῆσαι*, with the word *κωφός*, which is used for both dumb and deaf. So also the expression, ver. 64, *Ἀνεψύχθη δὲ τὸ στόμα αὐτοῦ παραχρῆμα καὶ ἡ γλῶσσα αὐτοῦ*. As De Wette says, the *σιωπῶν* indicates the fact, and *μηδυν. λαλ.* the effect.

<sup>2</sup> Dan. viii. 16; ix. 21.

<sup>3</sup> *ἀνθ' ὧν* is no Hebraism. *Matthiæ*, § 480. See also Luke xix. 44; Acts xii. 23.



doubt. Many opponents of the authenticity of the narrative insist upon the injustice of the penalty, as compared with the manner in which Abraham and Sarah were treated under similar circumstances. But notwithstanding a certain similarity, there were some grave differences. Abraham's faith in this matter is one of the commonplaces of Biblical thought. Neither Abraham's laughter nor his wife's can be put down to unbelief. St. Paul<sup>1</sup> gathered from the narrative a totally different impression. The name given by Abraham to the child of his old age, "Isaac," meaning laughter, may have implied joy, amazement, and surprise, but not incredulity. Moreover, as Witsius well observes, in Abraham's case there was far more reason for hesitation. This kind of birth was in his day a new thing in the earth. But Zacharias must have been familiar with the history of Abraham, Manoah, and Hannah, and if he used the same expression of doubtfulness, the "Whereby shall I know this?" of Abraham, He who searches the heart saw fundamental difference in his posture of mind.

De Wette, who sympathized with Strauss in his attack upon this part of the record, introduces a sentence<sup>2</sup> which does much to refute the mythical origin of the narrative in Luke. The difference, says he, is so great between the two cases, when taken in their entirety, that the one could not be a copy of the other.

The somewhat similar inquiry subsequently made by the Virgin Mary,<sup>3</sup> was perfectly consistent with her submission of herself to the Divine will. But Abraham,

<sup>1</sup> Gen. xvii. 17 ; xviii. 9-15 ; xxi. 6, 7 ; Rom. iv. 18-21.

<sup>2</sup> *Exeg. Handbuch.* Lucas, i. 18.

<sup>3</sup> Not *κατὰ τί γινώσκειν*, but simply *πῶς ἔσται τοῦτο*.



Mary, and Zacharias, might each have used precisely the same words, yet their motive and inner feeling might have been profoundly different. The rebuke of the angel points to a characteristic difference.<sup>1</sup> The dumbness, the inability to speak, was full of significance. For a while all garrulous proclamation of the fact was interdicted. It was a school wherein the spirituality of the priest was both quickened and completed.<sup>2</sup> It would have led to heart-searching and high aspiration. Strauss complains "that the infliction failed of its effect, as Elizabeth clearly knew the name that had been given to the child by the angel." This is simply absurd. It was impossible that the mother of the child could have been kept ignorant of the angelic message. Means were at hand for communicating with Zacharias. The writing-tablet was in use in the family, and though Elizabeth knew the name, she had to some extent voluntarily shared the punishment of her husband, for their friends and acquaintances were kept in entire ignorance of the transaction. Thus, so far from the dumbness having failed of its purpose, it had in fact gone beyond its original design, and by voluntary reticence communicated itself to another.

While Zacharias tarried in the temple, the people began to fear some Divine infliction upon the priest for a ceremonial informality, and when they saw him, the impression made upon them was that he had seen a vision in the temple. Such a vision was still in their imagination the precursor of death or calamity. They had not yet learned the Divine meaning of their own

<sup>1</sup> Lange, *Das Leben Jesu*, ii. Band. 2 Abtheilung; Witsius, l. c. *Excercitatio*, xv. § 22.

<sup>2</sup> L. Von Rohden. *Johannes der Tauffer in seinem Werken und Leben dargestellt*, p. 29.



psalm, "In thy presence is fulness of joy." His excited manner, his silence, and his gestures partly explain themselves. Time alone can reveal the grandeur of the hope that is being kindled in his doubting breast. When the days of his ministration are completed, he retires to his home in the hill country of Judæa.<sup>1</sup>

The Apocryphal Gospel of St. James<sup>2</sup> refers to the dumbness of Zacharias as a well-known fact occurring during the period in which the parents of Mary were seeking a resting-place for her, and persuading Joseph to act as her temporary protector. Zacharias is spoken of, moreover, as the high priest, an office which it is clear from our narrative and from the lists of the high priests he could never have filled. The period during which Zacharias is said to have kept silence was while Mary was weaving, under his sanction, a portion of the veil of the temple, "the scarlet and the true purple" portions of the material having fallen by lot to her. The tarrying of Zacharias in the temple, and the anxiety of the people lest harm should have befallen him, are given in connection with the account of his cruel murder by Herod's officers. The cause of the murder is stated to be that Herod sought for the young child John, on the pretext that he was destined to be king over Israel, and that Zacharias

<sup>1</sup> Lightfoot and Witsius beautifully contrast the possibilities of this dumb service in the temple with the abundant gift of speech with which the preachers and ministers of the New Covenant must have been endowed to do their wonderful work of convincing the understandings and saving the souls of men. Quandoquidem in plerisque illius partibus manuum præcipue usus erat ut tolerabilior linguæ defectus esset. Cæterum Evangelii ministerium, quum potissimum in verbi prædicatione consistat, per mutos peragi non potest: quamobrem principes illius præcones, patriam solum linguam primitus edocti et aliarum gentium respectu muti, extraordinario multarum linguarum dono munifice et mirifice locupletati sunt, nullis ut gentibus muti essent.—Witsius, l. c. §24.

<sup>2</sup> Tischf. *Evangelia Apocrypha—Protevangeliū Jacobi*, cap. 8-11 and 21.



refused to say where he was, and was consequently slain in the vestibule of the temple of the Lord about daybreak. And the sons of Israel did not know that he had been murdered.<sup>1</sup>

The numerous historical blunders crowded into this chapter, together with the entire tone of the narrative, form a striking contrast to the dignified record of St. Luke. The statements made in the *Koran* are less discrepant.<sup>2</sup>

After the return of Zacharias to Juttah, in the hill

<sup>1</sup> The following translation of *Prot. Jac.* c. 24, is given in the *Ante-Nicene Library*, vol. xvi. p. 14 : " But at the hour of the salutation the priests went away, and Zacharias did not come forth to meet them with a blessing, according to his custom. And the priests stood waiting for Zacharias, to salute him at the prayer, and to glorify the Most High. And he still delaying, they were all afraid. But one of them ventured to go in, and he saw clotted blood beside the altar ; and he heard a voice saying, ' Zacharias has been murdered, and his blood shall not be wiped up until his avenger come.' And hearing this saying, he was afraid, and went out and told it to the priests. And they ventured in, and saw what had happened ; and the fretwork of the temple made a wailing noise, and they rent \* their clothes from the top even to the bottom. And they found not his body, but they found his blood turned into stone. And they were afraid, and went out and reported to the people that Zacharias had been murdered. And all the tribes of the people heard, and mourned, and lamented for him three days and three nights. And after the three days, the priests consulted as to whom they should put in his place, and the lot fell upon Simeon ; for it was he who had been warned by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death until he should see the Christ in the flesh."

<sup>2</sup> *Alkoran*, c. iii. Sale's translation. " Zacharias called on the Lord and said, Lord, give me from Thee good offspring, for Thou art the hearer of prayer. And the angels (Gabriel, say the commentators) called to him while he stood praying in the chamber, Verily God promiseth thee a son, named John, who shall bear witness to the Word which cometh from God, an honourable person, chaste, and one of the righteous prophets. He answered, Lord, how shall I have a son, when old age hath overtaken me and my wife is barren? The angel said, God doth that which He pleaseth. Zacharias said, Lord, give me a sign. The angel said, Thy sign shall be that thou shalt speak to no man for three days, otherwise than by gesture. Remember thy Lord often, and praise Him evening and morning." See also a repetition of the same matter, with small alteration, c. xix.

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\* There are two readings of this passage. Tischf. prefers *καὶ αὐτοὶ περισχίσαντο ἀπὸ ἀνωθεν ἕως κατω* : the reading of C. *διεσχίσαντο τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτῶν* is preferred by the translator. The former, with its ungrammatical form, may be an apocryphal reference to the rending of the veil of the temple.



country of Judæa, Elizabeth conceived, and for five months concealed herself. Whatever other reasons may be conjectured for this course, we are distinctly told that she was full of thanksgiving because God had condescended to take away what had been the curse of her childlessness. In the beginning her pious hope went no further than this. Before the birth of her child, she was made aware of the still more exalted destination of her kinswoman, and was favoured with the society of the lowly maiden who had been selected by Eternal Love to become the mother of the Son of God.<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth was auditor of that burst of psalmody which came from the heart and lips of Mary when she found herself in the home of her aged relative. From her lips came the exulting cry, "Blessed be thou among women, and blessed be the fruit of thy womb."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The visit and journey of the maiden was an unusual proceeding, but it cannot be said that she was not accompanied by mother or sister. There is no necessity to suppose the circumstances of Matt. i. 17-20 to have occurred as yet. Lange, *Leben Jesu*, ii. 85; Ellicott, *H.L.* p. 51.

<sup>2</sup> The supposed recognition of Mary by the unborn child of Elizabeth is an unnecessary exaggeration of the narrative on which some patristic and Roman Catholic writers enlarge with much unction. Maldonatus quotes Ambrose, Bede, Origen, Chrysostom, and many others, who speak of this event as sign of the prophetic gift having been bestowed on John before his birth. Augustine refers to the exultation of John, "who not as yet had seen the light, as a thing not to be believed as possible except by the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit." Augustine had too much sense to lay emphasis on the idea of John's pre-natal inspiration; but it seems to be a point of high importance in the Catholic theology, as it provides an analogy to the supposed fact of the immaculate conception of the Virgin Mary herself. Bourdalouë, l. c., in his *Discours pour la Feste de S. Jean Baptiste*, says: "Car ne pensez pas qu'il ait attendu jusqu'au temps de sa predication pour rendre temoignage au Sauveur du monde. Dès le sein de sa mère il avait déjà commencé. Ce tressaillement que ressentit Elizabeth trois mois avant la naissance de ce fils si cher et donné de Dieu; cette joye dont il fut saisi et qu'il fit sensiblement paroître ce furent les premiers temoignages qu'il rendit à son Dieu. *Fervens Nuncius s'écrit St. Pierre Chrysologue, qui ante cœpit nuntiare Christum quam vivere.*" Keim, l. c. p. 478, compares the supposed inspiration of the unborn John with an extravagance of the *Book Sohar on Exodus*, where the unborn children of Israel were said to have praised God at the Red Sea. But this is not justified by Luke's narrative.



The recent history of Elizabeth had prepared her for the Divine communication : she was filled with the Spirit, both to speak and to listen, and probably it was on the ears of Elizabeth alone that the song of Mary fell. We cannot pass it without comment, for the simple reason that it expresses the tone of religious life and thought prevalent in this sacred home, and that it is therefore a guide to the earliest influences that were brought to bear upon the mind of John. It is formed on the Old Testament model. It is a psalm of triumph, in which the ring is heard of the songs of Miriam, Hannah, and Deborah, while the spirit of many of the psalms of Mary's minstrel ancestor breathes through it. It has often been said that it is almost a transcription of Hannah's song.<sup>1</sup> This is by no means the case. There are hardly two words of it identical with the LXX. translation of that song. There are phrases in it which recall the prayer of Hannah,<sup>2</sup> and others which correspond with expressions in certain Psalms,<sup>3</sup> but there is an originality in the arrangement, and a freshness in the poetical spirit of this burst of sacred minstrelsy, which are all its own.

If every phrase had been a biblical fragment, this would not have militated against either its originality, appropriateness, or authenticity ; it would simply have assisted us to picture to ourselves the home life in many a village in Judæa and Galilee, where the thoughts of inspiration were household words ; and have told us that one whose heart and life and person were to perform so solemn a part in the redemption of the world, poured forth, in the hallowed words of the older revelation, her hope for her country and mankind.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Sam. ii. 1-10.<sup>2</sup> Ibid. i. 11.<sup>3</sup> Psa. ciii. 17 ; cxix. 21.



The remarkable circumstance, to which special attention has already been called, is that it speaks of a state of feeling and of hope in which we cannot discern one trace of the cross, nor one hint of the humiliation and agony through which the world's Saviour must pass to His victory. A later hand, in the second century, forging the Virgin's song for her, could scarcely have concealed the current feeling which must have prevailed in the Christian community.

The spirit of Mary's song was this :—

“ My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit has abundantly exulted in God my Saviour.” This is a loftier burst of praise than Hannah's, which commenced with these words: “ My heart (*καρδία*) is strengthened in the Lord, and my horn is exalted in my God.” The joy of Mary's spirit (*πνεῦμα*) is a nobler confession than the self-satisfaction of Hannah in the lifting up of her horn of beauty, fame, renown, or pride. The mouth of the old Hebrew mother was enlarged against her more fortunate rival, and she was delighted with her (*σωτηρίαν*) deliverance from reproach. The mother of the Lord was exulting in the love of God her Saviour. She saw her low estate, and did not boast of her humility; but in the circumstance that God looked upon her lowliness with tender compassion, she felt, from the inward throbbing of her heavenly love, and the glances of prophetic light which fell on her, that from that moment of her being (*ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν*) all generations would call her happy. Then she proceeds to give the reason for this exalted consciousness of her high functions. “ The Mighty One (*ὁ δυνατός*), He who is the source of all power, hath wrought great deeds in me; but the power is not overshadowing His



true nature ; it is none other than the Holy One of Israel who has done it, and power and holiness reach their highest expression in His ‘mercy upon them that fear Him.’ ” In that phrase Mary forcibly reminds us of the Psalm from which she quotes “the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting, and his righteousness unto children’s children.” How sublime then was that conception of God on which, as the current Biblical thought, the infancy of John and Jesus must have been nourished ! Power, Holiness, and Mercy, these are His perfections. He is, moreover, a Saviour, a Lord, worthy of unbounded praise, gratulation, and love ; even making His claim felt throughout the whole region of the soul and spirit, linking generations together in His love of man. In the remaining portion of the song, in which Mary blesses God, there is a striking correspondence in general drift, but not in its expression nor even in its spirit, with Hannah’s detailed reference to the will of God of all reverses in the providential government of the world. Mary recognizes, in the fact of the great things (*μεγαλεία*) wrought in her, the essential elements of God’s judgment of the world. She here anticipates the Lord’s own language, “Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the prince of this world be cast out.” She feels that if the holy thing that will be born of her shall prove to be the Son of God,—if He shall be born of her, the lowly maiden of a decayed and forgotten house—born of her, the tender herb out of a dry ground, in that very fact the self-consciously great, the self-exalted, those who are peering above the heads of others in the imagination of their hearts, the intellectual tyrants of mankind, will be scattered like chaff



before the wind. What a foretaste this of Christ's great beatitude on the meek! Already, she continues, "Great potentates has he hurled from their thrones," and her prophetic glance foresees as accomplished the fall of the dominant powers of the world, the punctilious priest, the sumptuous prince, the venerable scribe, the gods and kings of the nations. The meek shall inherit the earth, the humble ones shall hear thereof and be glad. All lowly, lofty brows shall be crowned, in her crowning. The hungry shall be fed, the rich sent empty away, and thus a reversal of the common maxims of the world shall be effected in the simple fact of the incarnation of God. He who knew her better than any other save her Son, exclaimed, "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"<sup>1</sup> The song was not completed without more specific reference to the fact that God's servant Israel was hastening to his irremediable ruin; but God is faithful, and all the mercy promised to Abraham and his seed for ever is still in His heart, and He has come at length to strengthen, sustain, and save His people.<sup>2</sup> Thus she links the mighty thing done in herself with the oath and promise given to the fathers. Blessed be God, they did not die in hopeless illusion. They were trusting in no shadowy dream of future glory to their race. God's oath is inviolable, His mercy endureth for ever.

After the utterance of this wondrous psalm of heavenly hope, Mary remained with her kinswoman almost until the birth of the child of Elizabeth.<sup>3</sup> When this

<sup>1</sup> 1 John v. 5.

<sup>2</sup> ἀντελάβετο Ἰσραὴλ παῖδός αὐτοῦ.

<sup>3</sup> Unnecessary difficulty has been made about this chronology. Five months Elizabeth hid herself, in the *sixth* month the annunciation was made to Mary.



joyful event occurred, neighbours and friends congratulated the priestly pair. The Lord was believed by them to have magnified His mercy. It is remarkable that though the parents of this child entertained such a lofty conception of his destiny, and spake much of their happiness in thus having the Hebrew reproach of childlessness taken away from them, they do not appear to have dreamed of his being the promised Messiah. The name that he was to receive was neither "Jesus," nor "Emmanuel," but "John." He was sent from God, but was not the life and light of the world, and it is implied that they knew it.

This name was given on the eighth day, when the ordinance of circumcision was administered. In place of the classical *lustratio*,<sup>1</sup> and *dies lustricus* or *nominalis*, there was on this occasion solemn admission by circumcision into the theocratic family. Zacharias and Elizabeth were not following any special custom in formally assigning the heaven-sent name to their child at his circumcision, but they certainly established a precedent that has been widely followed in the Christian Church ; they mingled prayers, praise, holy sacrament, and consecration, with the open utterance of the name.

The dispute between Elizabeth and her neighbours about the name, led them to refer the matter by signs

Since Mary remained with Elizabeth three months, and left Judæa before the birth of John, the discovery of her pregnancy could not have been made by Joseph until after her return to Nazareth. This is the order of the *Evangelium de Nativitate Mariæ*, cap. 9-11. See Greswell, *Diss.* 14 ; Ebrard's *Gospel History*, § 34, E. T. ; Ellicott, *His. Lec.* p. 51. The difficulty Strauss has found in the comparison of Matthew's account with Luke's is quite gratuitous.

<sup>1</sup> It was customary for Greeks and Romans to give their names to children on the eighth, ninth, or tenth day. Many of the solemnities of these days are referred to by Isaac Casaubon, *Ad Satyr*, ii. Persii ; Doughtœus, in *Analectis Sacris*, part ii., quoted by Witsius, *Exercit. Sac.* p. 498 ; art. "Nomen," Smith's *Dict. Antiquities*, p. 802.



to the father. He took the writing-tablets and confirmed the name of JOHN.<sup>1</sup> We cannot doubt that the Evangelist represents the deaf-muteness of Zacharias as having been brought to a miraculous termination by this expression of his faith in the goodness and faithfulness of God. There is nothing supernatural in the fact of such dumbness, nor in its sudden cessation: the supernatural feature is the timing of the infliction and its correspondence with the prophetic words of an angel. That a man who contributed so great a gift to the kingdom of God, should have been thus lifted above the ordinary experiences of humanity, does not make a very serious demand upon the faith of any one who believes in a living God, or in a revelation of His will, through the intelligence of certain individuals. Whether Zacharias must be deemed infallibly correct in his explanation of what happened to him in the temple, may be an open question; but there is a remarkable indication that he was filled with the Holy Spirit in the burst of inspiration that subsequently broke from his lips. The hymn of Zacharias was in substance poured forth at this culminating moment of his life. There is no serious difficulty in this, unless we come to the conclusion that the human soul, in its loftiest moments, and when consciously alive to the part it is playing in the evolution of the great world-plan of God, cannot rise above commonplace either in thought or diction. There is no greater psychological puzzle here than may be found in the records of a thousand bursts of unprepared eloquence which

<sup>1</sup> If Zacharias wrote in Greek [*ἔσται* rather than *ἔσται*], it would, as Grotius observed, be a further expression of the confidence he had in his own heavenly vision; but as he probably wrote in Hebrew, שָׁמַר יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, there was no necessity for any note of time.



have fallen from human lips under the pressure of strong emotion. A certain ordination and parallelism of *thought*, a rhythm and measured flow of *words*, were the appropriate accompaniments of the utterance of such a man at such a moment. The silent months during which restraint had been put upon the vocal thanksgiving of the Hebrew priest, provide all the opportunity needed, on the purely human side, for such an outburst of holy song.

It is not only a gift of the spirit of prophecy to the Christian Church, and therefore rightly adopted into her worship, but it is a further hint of the kind of influence to which the youth of John was subjected. It is distinctly claimed as a prophecy, and Zacharias is declared to be "filled with the Holy Spirit." A similar qualification is ascribed in ver. 41 to Elizabeth, and the angel predicts the same grace as one of the chief features of John's own character. This mode of expression is applied to the twelve, to the whole Church: to the apostles Peter and Paul.<sup>1</sup> The Spirit was not poured out on old men and maidens, nor on humanity at large, nor was it made the chief method of the dispensation of grace until the Christ was glorified, until HE shed forth that which the outside world could see and hear.<sup>2</sup> Then it became the law of the Spirit of life that believers should be filled<sup>3</sup> with the Spirit, and that fellowship with unseen and eternal things, a lofty unworldly impulse guiding them to perfect satisfaction and rest in God, a holy imitation of Jesus, a full assurance of faith, a Divine power of suffering and patience, a deep humility, a gentle sweetness and meekness, a holy wrath against evil, with

<sup>1</sup> Acts ii. 4 ; iv. 8, 31 ; xiii. 9.   <sup>2</sup> John vii. 38, 39 ; Acts ii. 33.   <sup>3</sup> Eph. v. 18.



compelling and persuasive speech, should all find their abundant realization in the gift of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Spirit was not given in fulness until it was poured forth abundantly by the risen Christ, yet the prophets of the Old Testament had been taught the source of their inspiration.<sup>1</sup> The sweet singer of Israel cried, "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue."<sup>2</sup> Moses prayed, "Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them;"<sup>3</sup> and the Spirit of God came upon Balaam,<sup>4</sup> Saul,<sup>5</sup> Azariah,<sup>6</sup> and Ezekiel.<sup>7</sup> Job<sup>8</sup> recognizes the Spirit of God as the source of human life and understanding, and the Spirit of God is described in the Proverbs as the means of Divine communication to man.<sup>9</sup>

The prophecy of Zacharias was Hebrew in its tone and phraseology, and the LXX. version of the Old Testament will supply parallels for many of its expressions. I am not in the least disposed to accept the arrangement of the song into strophes and antistrophes, after the fashion of Bishop Jebb,<sup>10</sup> nor to adopt his position that much light is thrown upon its grammatical difficulties by making it to consist of two songs or sets of semi-choruses interwoven with each other, which may be separated from one another, and translated in closer harmony with Greek grammar. Any such artificial arrangement appears utterly at war with the historical origin of the song, while the grammatical roughnesses

<sup>1</sup> Schöttgen, *Horæ Heb.* i. 255, says of the phrase, "Locutio Judæis familiaris." *Bammidbar Rabba*, §13, fol. 221-4, de Mose et lxx. senioribus Israelis, "Ipse et illi omnes impleti sunt Spiritu sancto."

<sup>2</sup> 2 Sam. xxiii. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Numb. xi. 29.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. xxiv. 2.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Sam. x. 10; xix. 23.

<sup>6</sup> 2 Chron. xv. 1.

<sup>7</sup> Ezek. xi. 24.

<sup>8</sup> Job xxxii. 8; xxxiii. 4.

<sup>9</sup> Prov. i. 23.

<sup>10</sup> Jebb's *Sacred Literature*, §21.



or ellipses favour the idea that we have before us the simple and fervent outpouring of a surcharged soul. It is not only that Zacharias sees before him the child of his old age, the herald of a brighter day, the Elijah of the kingdom of God, but he knows the secret of Elizabeth and Mary. He believes that God has come to succour and to save His people in some new and wonderful fashion. He is alive to the special favour shown to the humble heiress of the throne of David, and he blends all the rapture of his own heart and hers in his utterance of praise. "*Blessed be the Lord God of Israel* (probably in Hebrew, Jehovah the God of Israel), *for he hath visited his people* (ἐπεσκέψατο, with the familiarity of a friend and the tenderness of a physician), *and hath wrought redemption* (λύτρωσιν) *for them.*" He was not confining his thought to deliverance from political servitude, for, as we see later on, sin and death, bewildering unrest and spiritual bondage, are some of the tyrannies from which he believes salvation possible. This redemption is at once referred to "*the horn of salvation raised in the house of his servant David.*" The horn is the image of strength and safety rather than of ornament or beauty. "The horn of David"<sup>1</sup> was doubtless the source of the expression, the visit and revelation of Mary, the cause of his congratulation. More than a slight hint is thus given of the belief held by Zacharias and by Luke (whatever difficulties the genealogies may present), that Mary was of the house and lineage of David. When he at once asso-

<sup>1</sup> Schöttgen, *Horæ Heb.* i. 259, cites *Mechilta.* fol. 29. 2. "Quum audirent gentes, quod Deus extulisset cornu Israelis eosque in terram detulisset tunc coeperunt irasci;" with many other proofs that the *horn* of salvation was a phrase which the rabbinical writers associated with the time of Messiah. *Psa.* cxxxii. 17. *Comp. Ezek.* xxix. 21.



ciates the fact of the approaching birth of the heir of David with that which God had proclaimed by the lips of holy prophets from the beginning of the ages, going right back to the protevangelium uttered in paradise, he feels that he is one of the glorious brotherhood who have linked the generations hand in hand. The torch of prophecy flames up as he lights it at their forgotten altars. Zacharias then defines more fully the salvation which has been accomplished, as a "*deliverance from our enemies and from the hands of all that hate us.*" With the history of Israel in his memory, its strange vitality and innumerable falls, and all the hatred, the scoff, and tyrannous rule of the great nations and powers of the world, such "salvation" (σωτηρίαν) justifies his burst of praise. With a fervour that does not stop for Greek prepositions, he hurries on, "*so as to have exercised mercy towards our fathers,*"<sup>1</sup> i.e., not merely by the fulfilment of promises on which they lived and died, to have made it clear to us their children that they did not live and die upon a shadowy, illusive hope; but also actually to have affected their present position, and completed the redemption which, as conscious beings, they are still awaiting. Further, "*let him be blessed for ever that he has remembered his holy covenant, even the oath*<sup>2</sup> *which he sware to our father Abraham, that he would grant that we, being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, might worship him without fear, in*

<sup>1</sup> See a similar grammatical usage, Luke x. 39.

<sup>2</sup> I prefer, with Winer, Bleek, Meyer, and Alford, to regard ὅρκον as the object of μνησθῆναι. There is an instance (Isa. lxiii. 7) where this verb is seen to govern the accusative, but if that cannot be pressed, it may be attracted, by the ὅν which follows it, into the accusative. The ὅρκον is in apposition with the διαθήκης. God's oath is His side of the covenant, and that part of it which He has specially remembered. It is true that ἀμνύναι is often constructed with a dative, but not exclusively so. Acts vii. 17; James v. 12.



*holiness and righteousness all the days of our life.*" In the bitter memories of captivity and Divine forsaking, Israel might well have lost heart, but not while such faith as this was lighting her altar fires. Holiness and righteousness ; loving, fearless worship ; deliverance from the oppressor's hand, from cruel exile, from threats of profanation or extinction at the hands of Antiochus or Cæsar, and a lifelong rest in God—such are the visions that float before the priest, and which gather like an aureole of light around the head of the little child of his old age. Is it incredible and unhistorical, because perhaps it is not common-place, that in holy song Zacharias should have gone still further, and foreshadowing the future destiny of the child about whom such hopes had been kindled, should have cried—and "*thou little child shalt be called,*" that is, be recognized as well as be, "*a prophet of the Highest*"? Then he took up the language of Malachi and Isaiah, similarly blended afterwards by John himself, "*thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways.*"<sup>1</sup> In the hearts of the people, in the institutions of Judaism, the Lord Himself needed that preparation should be made, before the sublime truth of the Incarnation, before the gift of the Holy Ghost, could be received.<sup>2</sup> The preparation of the ways of Jehovah is made to consist of two things. (a) The giving knowledge of salvation to His people in the remission of their sins, the salvation consisting of the remission. (b) The guiding or right directing of their feet, their mode of life and conduct, into the way

<sup>1</sup> Mal. iii. 1 and iv. 5 ; Mark i. 2, 3.

<sup>2</sup> If we try to catch the order of the remaining thoughts, we must observe that ver. 77 and the latter clause of ver. 79 are alike introduced by a genitive article with the infinitive, and probably stand in close relation, if not of apposition.



of peace; so that God's way becomes man's way, God's salvation becomes man's peace. Whence can such blessed (*γνώσις*) knowledge come? How shall "the way of peace," which according to both prophets and psalmists the sinner never could find, be revealed? On what does "the salvation, even the forgiveness of sins," really depend? With a flash of inspiration, Zacharias sees that it approaches us *through the tenderly compassionate mercy of our God*, in the full exercise of which a BRANCH OF LIGHT *from the highest heaven has appeared to give light to those that sit in darkness and the shadow of death.*

The kind of influence and education to which this strangely-gifted child was submitted may be partially gathered from these two songs. Nor would this inference be very seriously impugned, if we should grant the correctness of Schleiermacher's or Keim's theory as to the composition of these noble New Testament psalms.<sup>2</sup>

The early home of John was the priestly family of Zacharias, with all its sacerdotal habits and converse, its religious excitement and ritual, and frequent association with the temple service and worship. Connected on the mother's side with the tribe of Judah and the

<sup>1</sup> The verb *ἀνατέλλω* is used for the rising above the horizon of sun or stars, and of the rising out of the ground of the sprout and germ of living vegetation: *ἀνατολή* is used by LXX. to translate *נֶחֱמָץ*, which is also progeny of man, and acquires a technical meaning, as given to the great Son and Heir of David. Jer. xxiii. 5, xxxiii. 15, *ἀναστήσω τῷ Δαυϊεὶδ ἀνατολήν δικαίαν*. *Ανατολήν* is used by Zech. iii. 8. But both ideas of the word are blended in Isa. lx. 1, *ἡ δόξα κυρίου ἐπὶ σὲ ἀνατέταλκεν*. Mal. iv. 2, the Sun of Righteousness, *ἀνατελεῖ ὑμῖν*. The difficulty of preserving *ἀνατολή* in either of its primary significations is difficult from the addition *ἐξ ὕψους*, i.e., from the zenith rather than the horizon, and the obvious significance of the bursting forth of light is prominently preserved in the passage both in the *ἐπιφᾶναι*, &c., which follows, as well as the *κατευθῆναι κ. τ. λ*

<sup>2</sup> Keim, l. c. pp. 471-478.



house of David, the political aspirations of the people would often be breathed loudly in his hearing. The feverish expectation of a political Saviour, a Messiah-Prince, a Deliverer from Roman bondage, would find frequent expression in the home of Zacharias and Elizabeth. They believed that the train of circumstances had been already laid that would ultimately issue in a full realization of the promises made to their fathers. They knew that they were associated with the succession of events which would bring in the fruition of glorious visions on which their fathers lived and died. They must have been peculiarly sensitive to the faithfulness of God, and the sacredness and vitality of the true Israel. The canticles reveal a vivid interest in, and acquaintance with, the canonical Scriptures. The phraseology of the older histories, of the Psalms of David, of Isaiah and Malachi, were household words in that mountain home. The story of Abraham would be often recited in the neighbourhood of the sacred cave of Machpelah. The career of David could not have been unfamiliar to a youth who was often wandering over the slopes of Hebron and the fields of Bethlehem, and hunting for wild honey in the wilderness of Judæa. The gates of the spirit-world had often been opened to the parents of John and Jesus. This may have added some weird and ghostly fancies to the tenor of their daily life, and possibly had something to do with the special vocation assigned to the youth of John. He must have learned that God's judgments upon human nature are supreme and final, reversing the common estimates of men. He must have been educated in the belief of the approach of radical changes in the body-politic, in the introduction of a



new standard of holy living. The God whom he was taught to worship was intensely personal, was faithful to promise, accessible to prayer, was the highest God, who yet condescends to come very near to His people. He was rendered peculiarly alive to the misery of sin, the possibility of its forgiveness, the ground of that forgiveness in the loving compassion and kindness of the Highest One, who was nevertheless their God. The condition of Israel itself was one of comparative darkness and shadow of death. It was a matter of faith to him that persecution, that the repression of religious hopes, and that the perils and fears amidst which his fathers had worshipped, would pass away, and that this great, holy, compassionate God, would prove to be their Saviour, Deliverer, and Friend.

How soon after the birth of John his parents died cannot be determined, but we are told that the child was in the desert, ever waxing strong in spirit until the day of his public appearance, his official inauguration, his open assumption of his prophetic mission—until the day of his (*ἀναδείξῃς*) showing to Israel. The full significance of this expression may require further exposition. It is enough to say here that he must very soon have acquired personal independence. His wants were religiously limited, his tastes simple, and his dependence on his brother-men therefore reduced to a minimum. Taught from the first that he was to become a prophet of the Lord, he would ponder the lives and words of the heaven-sent men of old. Aware of the fact that he was to be associated with the fulfilment of the great hope of the nation, he could not have misconstrued the prophetic words on which the nation lived. He must have



sighed in secret over the profanation of holy things, the subserviency of the Sanhedrim and priesthood to foreign rule, the corruption of all classes, the fierce bigotries, the aberrations of heart with which the people were torn and divided, the severance between the fathers and the children, the leaders of the people and the multitude. He must have anticipated the great and terrible day of the Lord, the coming of the King of glory and majesty, with awful reverence and dread emotion. So far as we know, religiously fulfilling the vow of the Nazarite, separated from human society, cut off from the ordinary converse of men, he derived little advantage from the doctors of the law, from whom Jesus, at twelve years of age, is represented as receiving instruction. We do not imagine that he was trained in any of the existing schools. His education was the memory of his childhood and the knowledge of his commission, and was effected by the Spirit of the living God. His schoolmasters were the rocks of the desert of Judæa, the solemn waters of the Dead Sea, the eternal Presence that fills the solitudes of nature, the sins, the shame, the vows, the hopes, the professions of his countrymen. The Messianic hope of the people must have taken deep root in his mind. We shall have hereafter to assay and estimate its quality, but if we may glean anything from the specimens afforded by the Gospel of the infancy, concerning the religious influences of his home, there was no reference to the personal suffering or vicarious sacrifice of the Messiah, no anticipation of the cross or the resurrection of the Christ. This much was burned in upon his soul, that the kingdom of the Messiah would be independent of the ordinary asso-



ciations of majesty; that the hungry, the needy, the lowly, the obscure, would become the rulers in this kingdom, and that the meek would inherit the earth. Light and salvation and deliverance would follow the visit of a Divine Friend; One born of woman would yet appear like a descent from highest heaven of a new luminary upon the world. If we may add to these influences such thought as presents itself in the words of the aged Simeon or Anna, we then trace the idea that the heavenly light was expected to shine upon the Gentiles as well as on the people of Israel. By the prophetic words of Simeon, treasured in the heart of Mary, John may have known that the manifestation of the Christ would occasion *the fall as well as the rising again of many in Israel, and be a sign to be spoken against*. Admitting that there is more trace of later authorship in the language of Simeon than in that of Zacharias or Mary, it yet breathes the same archaic spirit, and reflects the tone of feeling to which the mind of John may have been subjected.

The general effect of the whole of these influences appears in the manhood and ministry of John. All that we are definitely told is, that "the child waxed strong in spirit." This was the main characteristic of his development. The spirit was mightier than the flesh, the outward circumstances gave way to the purpose of his life. His will was stronger than the wills of those with whom he came into contact, and he nursed in the desert his hope of preparing the way of the Lord. A solitary verse of Luke's Gospel is the only detail of the early life of John. Those who reject the poetic embellishment of the narrative are not unwilling to accept this statement as historic. The Koran con-



tains a few verses which are not inconsistent with the Biblical narrative.

“We (the angels) said unto John the son of Zacharias, O John, receive the book of the law with a resolution to study and observe it. And we bestowed on him wisdom while yet a child, and mercy from us, and purity of life ; and he was a devout person, and dutiful towards his parents, and was not proud or rebellious. Peace be on him, the day whereon he was born, the day whereon he shall die, and the day whereon he shall be restored to life.” <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Chap. xix. of Sale's translation.



LECTURE III.

*JOHN THE EXPONENT OF THE OLD  
TESTAMENT DISPENSATION.*







## LECTURE III.

### JOHN THE EXPONENT OF THE OLD TESTAMENT DISPENSATION.

JOHN may not unreasonably be regarded as the voice of some of the unconscious prophecies of heathendom. Oriental influences were to some extent focussed in his consciousness, and came through him into historical relations with Christ and His apostles; but the literature and institutions of Israel provide the main conditions of His mission. He has new truth to utter, and a special office to fulfil, but we shall not understand either of these, without a review of those elements which are due to the age, to the race, and to the civil and religious life in the midst of which his lot was cast. These elements may be briefly stated as fourfold. He was a PRIEST, he was a NAZARITE, he was a PROPHET, and he was "MORE THAN A PROPHET." An investigation of the significance of these qualifications of John, as the forerunner of the Christ, will furnish us with some of the theological and ecclesiastical lessons involved in his career.

#### § 1. *The Priest.*

We are told by the Evangelist Luke,<sup>1</sup> that at a date<sup>2</sup> which he asserts to have been contemporary with the

<sup>1</sup> Luke iii. 1, 2.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix.



fifteenth year of Tiberius Cæsar, with the tetrarchate of Herod Antipas in Galilee, and the procuratorship of Pontius Pilate in Judæa, with the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, and the tetrarchates of Philip and Lysanias—John the son of Zacharias came preaching in the wilderness of Judæa. The simple mention of John's parentage is an assurance of his priestly birth, and since the biblical history of his nativity<sup>1</sup> turns upon the sacerdotal functions of his father, we are reminded at once that John belonged to the consecrated tribe, and to the sacred family which had been entrusted with the sacrificial cultus, the religious institutions, and much of the teaching power of the theocracy. It is true that we have no record<sup>2</sup> of his taking any part in the temple service, and no express reference to his priestly functions; yet, in the simple fact of his birth, there is some light thrown upon his position, and some explanation of the hold which he rapidly gained upon the sympathies and attention of his contemporaries. It was not uncommon for prophets to be chosen from among the priests. Thus, Jeremiah and Ezekiel,<sup>3</sup> though called to a still higher office, and empowered to criticize and reform the national life and their own religious order, had doubtless a higher power of utterance, and felt that their prophetic authority was augmented in force, by the circumstance that they had a prescriptive right to speak to Israel in the name of Jehovah. They belonged to the family and to the

<sup>1</sup> See passage from Gospel of the Ebionites, preserved by Epiphanius adv. Hær. xxx. 13 [*Epiph. Opera.* ed. Petavius, 1682; vol. i. p. 138]. *Ἰωάννης ὃς ἐλέγετο εἶναι ἐκ γένους Ααρὼν τῶν ἱερέων.*

<sup>2</sup> No scriptural record. We have seen in the extract from Jos. B. Gorion. that he was regarded in one form of the Jewish tradition as *magnus sacerdos*.

<sup>3</sup> Jer. i. 1, 2; Ezek. i. 3.



order and institution which exercised an hereditary influence of consummate importance during the childhood of the theocracy. They were priests. Ezra,<sup>1</sup> the great historical character of the restoration, combined in his own person the characteristics of the priest and the scribe. His literary work, his political duties, his relation to the canon of Scripture, his conspicuous place in the restoration of the national life, were promoted by the fact that he was entrusted by birthright with solemn responsibilities, and belonged to an order of men from which he could not disengage himself.<sup>2</sup> Prophets, kings, and scribes were, as such, a nobler class than the priests, not only by reason of the special functions they were primarily called to discharge, but by the higher freedom and spontaneity of their call, and by the variety of the duties to which they were summoned or impelled. This is not the place to discuss fully either the law of the sacerdotal appointment, the purpose for which the priesthood continued to exist, the strange and even revolting rites to which the priests were inured, the history of the office in the national development, the fundamental antithesis between the prophet and the priest, or the capability which the priesthood possessed of engrafting upon itself other responsibilities. Still, a few words upon this theme are necessary to a right apprehension of the career of John.

<sup>1</sup> Ezra vii. 1-5.

<sup>2</sup> Ewald, *Geschichte des Volkes Israel*. Band 4, p. 145. "Diese priesterliche Abstammung war für ihn zwar ein mächtiger Hebel sein kräftiges Streben und Wirken gerade auf die Religion und Wissenschaft seines Volkes zu richten: und da er das Muster eines solchen Priesters wurde wie ihn diese Jahrhunderte verlangten, so trägt er in der Geschichte auch den Beinamen *des Priesters* schlechthin, ein Beiname welcher sonst bei keinem anderen gebornen Priester eine so hohe Bedeutung empfangen hat. Ezra vii. 11, 21; x. 10, 16; Neh. viii. 2-9; xii. 26. Im. cod. Alex. trägt das I. Buch Ezra (sonst Ezra Apocryphus oder Ezra Græcus genannt), die Überschrift ὁ Ἱερεὺς.



A priesthood was probably contemporaneous with the earliest division of labour. M. Comte<sup>1</sup> assigns the origination of priesthoods to fetishism when it is passing from the worship of mere earthly or animal charms to the cultus of the celestial fetish, *i.e.*, of heavenly bodies, of sun, moon, stars, planets, and of the great forces of nature. But this interpretation of the origin of the religious idea is arbitrary and unverified. It is true that man, as a religious being, eagerly seizes on the help which confident pretension is always offering to his instinctive mysticism. Men are naturally dependent, and resent by instinct all enforced isolation; they delight to roll on the shoulders of others the burdens that belong to their own. Hence the most uncultivated as well as civilized races have divided their common duties amongst themselves, and have thus called into existence orders, castes or classes of men, upon whom they have devolved the duty of propitiating the Deity, of worshipping His awful name with an appropriate ceremonial, of preserving the sacred traditions of their tribe or nation, and of producing by force, fraud, argument, or persuasion, unanimity of ethical and transcendental convictions. Various principles of selection have been in vogue, but they have all sprung from a primary sense of universal responsibility. The hereditary principle was commonly adopted in Egypt, India,<sup>2</sup> and Palestine,

<sup>1</sup> On reconnuttra, que le fétichisme est alors essentiellement parvenu à l'état d'astrolatrie, qui constitue son plus haut perfectionnement propre, et sous lequel s'effectue sa transition generale au polytheisme proprement dit. Or, cette phase plus éminente, mais aussi beaucoup plus tardive du fétichisme fondamentale, tend, en effet par sa nature spéciale, à provoquer directement le developpement distinct d'un vrai sacerdoce. A Comte. *Cours de Philosophie Positive*. Tome v. p. 58. See the argument of the whole *Leçon*, 52.

<sup>2</sup> Diodorus, i. 73. Herodotus (ii. 143) declares that both to Hecatæus and himself the Theban priests had indicated the hereditary succession and genea-



and was not confined to the religious order of things ; but, anterior to any such determination of an hereditary guild or caste of priests, there is clear proof that the personal, or at least the family responsibility of offering sacrifice and worship to God, was widely recognized.

The word designating in the Hebrew Scriptures the person entrusted with these responsibilities, does not appear to have a clearly-defined meaning, and fluctuated in its earliest usage. Expositors differ as to its etymology.<sup>1</sup> The head of each household, in the earliest times, is represented as a priest, and the patriarchal and princely are hardly distinguished from

logical lists of their predecessors. See also Wilkinson's Notes to Rawlinson's Translation, vol. ii. p. 224, and *Manners and Customs of Egyptians*, vol. i. p. 316, from which it appears that the son of a priest was not *compelled* to follow his father's profession. Kenrick's *Ancient Egypt*, vol. ii. c. 14. Manning's *Ancient and Mediæval India*, vol. i. p. 69, ff. Roman priests were originally appointed by the kings, but colleges of priests had the right of filling up their numbers by *cooptatio*. See art. "Sacerdos," *Dict. Antiq.* S. B. Gould. *Origin and Development of Religious Belief*. Vol. i. p. 198, ff., on the relation of theocracies to caste. *Hindu Tribes and Castes*. M. A. Sherring. Chap. i.—"The Brahman is the *priest* of the Hindu religion."

<sup>1</sup> כֹּהֵן is referred (1) by Schultens, *Orig. Heb.* p. 228 ; Vitranga, *Comm. in Jes.* ii. p. 974 ; Cocceius, *Lex.* s.v ; Plumptre, art. "Priest" in Smith's *Dict. of Bible* ; Bähr, *Symb.* ii. 15, to an Arabic root meaning "to be near"—making "*cohanim*" those who *draw near* to God ; but this particular function is described by another word, when the order was fully developed. Lev. x. 3 ; Ezek. xl. 46 ; xlii. 13. (2) Hitzig, *Comm.* Isa. lxi. 10 ; Fürst, *Lex.* s.v ; Ewald, *Alterth.* p. 272. Oehler, *Herzog's Ency.* art. "Priesterthum," xii. p. 174 ; Hupfeld on Psa. cx. 4, derive it from כָּוִן, "to stand by," to assist. (3) A probable etymology is from Arabic root "cahan," to predict, with its "cahant," "art of presage," as the office of priest and prophet were in earliest instances combined. This is the view preferred by Gesenius. *Lex.* s.v. and Kalisch. (4) Again, others have referred כֹּהֵן to a similar Arabic root, meaning to "*serve*, to minister," and especially to minister to a king. In this sense it is supposed to be used Gen. xli. 45, 50 ; Exod. ii. 16 ; Job xii. 19 ; 2 Sam. viii. 18, where, though frequently translated in LXX. and A.V. by phrases denoting political eminence, the religious functions lay at the background. Thus Melchizedek, Jethro, the sons of David, are undoubtedly declared to be in some sense "priests." The etymology being doubtful, the connotation of the word is developed by circumstances, and the office as such is ultimately differentiated from that of the prophet and the prince.



the sacerdotal functions. The patriarch builded his altar, slew his victims, offered his sacrifices, and generally directed the religious ceremonial of his household.<sup>1</sup> Thus Melchizedek, the king of Salem, was a priest of the highest God,<sup>2</sup> and Balaam, a prince and prophet of Moab, is represented as offering a bullock and a ram on the altars erected for him.<sup>3</sup> Every head of a household was commanded in the first instance to slay the paschal sacrifice,<sup>4</sup> and therefore to perform priestly services; and the household priesthood<sup>5</sup> was clearly recognized before the selection of any tribe or family for the purpose. We see no trace of the hereditary principle till in the first instance Moses,<sup>6</sup> then his family,<sup>7</sup> and then the whole tribe to which he belonged, were invested with functions which were morally incumbent on every offerer.<sup>8</sup>

Levi occupied the same relation towards his brother tribes as did the family of "Aaron the Levite" to the rest of that tribe, both in respect of sacerdotal dignity and temporal support. The whole dignity was at length concentrated on the person of the high priest, the hereditary representative of Aaron. It is, however, interesting to observe that the whole congregation of Israel<sup>9</sup> offered up the tribe of Levi as a sacrifice to Jehovah, and by laying their hands upon the representative Levites, were supposed to have transferred their Divine responsibility to the sacred family. The true source of

<sup>1</sup> See Gen. xii. 7, 8; xiii. 4; xxii. ; xxviii. 19; xxxi. 54; xxxv. 7, 15; Job i. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. xiv. 18.

<sup>3</sup> Numb. xxiii. 2, 14, 30.

<sup>4</sup> Exod. xii. 7-22.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. xix. 22-24.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. xxiv. 6.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. xxviii.

<sup>8</sup> Numb. i. 49, 50; iii. 6-10; viii. 8-22. Ewald, *History of Israel* (Eng. trans.), vol. ii. p. 141, ff., regards the history of the priestly dignity of the Levites as unhistorical; and Dr. Colenso, *Pentateuch and Moabite Stone*, has carried the scepticism of the validity of the narrative into many details.

<sup>9</sup> Numb. viii. 5-22.



their holiness, of their consecration, of their sublime function of "drawing near to Jehovah," was the choice, the need, the previous responsibility of the entire people, who were in fact "a kingdom of priests."<sup>1</sup> This particular tribe was chosen for the purpose as being the tribe of Moses and Aaron, and it was made a substitute for the first-born of Israel who were made holy unto the Lord in virtue of the terrible devotion to God of the first-born of the Egyptians. This circumstance furnished the grandest conception of sacrifice and consecration which is to be found in the Old Testament. It was doubtless a division of labour, a voluntary relinquishment on the part of a whole people of their natural right to a large proportion of the fruits of their productive toil, in order that they might secure a certain satisfaction of their religious instincts and needs; that the worship of God might be rendered adequately; and that the sacrifices, the incense, and all the cumbrous ceremonial might be strictly attended to without flaw or defection. It was also a proof that Israel in the olden time—as Christendom has done in these last days—shrank back in fear and trembling from its high calling, and needed a long process of education for this priestly work. The tribe of Levi was thus thrown on the charity, on the religious sensibility, on the loyalty of the other tribes. It appears, even from the Mosaic narrative, that "the Levite within the gates" of their cities was the poor and needy class, the dependant, and mendicant. He had no other inheritance among Israel than that which the sufferance of his brethren and their reverence for religious and traditional custom provided for him. Scattered like the

<sup>1</sup> Exod. xix. 6.



members of a sacred caste through the population, the Levites were a perpetual reminder to the people of the Divine idea, and kept up a continual relation with the mother city. Even Micah the priestmaker, with his fetishistic notions of God and His worship, and notwithstanding his degraded moral tone, was comforted and satisfied so long as he secured a Levite to be his priest;<sup>1</sup> though in later times the priests must have rendered a divided allegiance to their national faith, and were often the most deadly transgressors of the law, both in its ritual and moral aspects.<sup>2</sup> All the Levites were not priests, though all the orthodox Jewish priests were Levites; and very frequently the biblical narrative called particular attention to the fact. Aaron, the head of the entire hierarchy, was often described as "*the Levite.*"<sup>3</sup> "The priests the Levites" is the term continually used to denote the family of Aaron. There was however an early development of sacerdotal feud.<sup>4</sup> Korah was a Levite, but he was backed by a powerful party of chiefs and princes, such as Dathan and Abiram, who were of the tribe of Reuben. These sustained him in his assault, both upon the special dignity of the priesthood and upon the supreme authority of Aaron. Probably the fact that his associates were of the tribe of Reuben, the first-born of the patriarchs, furnished ground for the assault upon a tribe which may have been thought to have usurped its functions. In some respects Korah was in advance of his day and time. He was ambitious, disloyal, rebellious against the recently constituted hierarchy; but his "gainsaying" rested upon what was a fundamental

<sup>1</sup> Judg. xvii. xviii.

<sup>2</sup> Isa. xxviii. 7, 8; lvi. 10-12; Jer. viii. 1, 2; Ewald, *Geschichte des Volkes*, iii. 704.

<sup>3</sup> Exod. iv. 14.

<sup>4</sup> Numb. xvi.



truth, that all the congregation was holy, that the whole nation was priestly, and that he, as a Levite, had been offered to the Lord. Moreover, Levite as he was, he may have felt indignation against the hereditary privileges conferred upon his own tribe, and probably shared the opposition of the other tribes to this solitary illustration in the Mosaic code of the strictly hereditary principle.<sup>1</sup> The prophets subsequently took higher ground than he had done; and they rebuked the assumptions of the priestly class, and denounced even the divinely-appointed sacrifices when these had ceased to express religious consecration. If Korah had succeeded in his attempt to undermine the authority of Aaron, and to establish the broad and grand principle, "Every man his own priest," the concentrated and inflexible character of the national religion might have been destroyed at the outset. The people had not then been educated to understand all that was involved in the unity of the sanctuary, nor had the idea or practice of holiness been universally apprehended, nor could the typical character of the great ceremonies and of the altar of burnt-offering have been taught by the doctrine of individualism. If that lesson had been lost, or never impressed upon the minds of the people, much of the sacred mission of Israel to the world would have failed of realization. In a fearful catastrophe which Moses foresaw, and treated as a special mark of Divine displeasure, Korah and all that appertained to him were destroyed by earthquake, and two hundred and fifty Levites were consumed by fire

<sup>1</sup> Alexandre Weill, *Moïse et le Talmud*, p. 120, ff., agrees with Spinoza, *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, in attributing to the hereditary honours of the tribe of Levi and family of Aaron the principal calamities and ultimate fall of Israel.



from heaven.<sup>1</sup> A remarkable difference characterized the treatment of illegitimate aspirants to the prophetic and priestly offices. When Eldad and Medad prophesied in the camp, and one ran and told Moses, and when Joshua said, "My lord Moses, forbid them," the reply was, "Enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them!"<sup>2</sup> When Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, encouraged perhaps by these grand words of the great lawgiver, attempted to invade the functions of Aaron, his language was, "Ye take too much upon you, ye sons of Levi." The political and religious end of the great disaster was that the brazen censers of these rebellious men were made into broad plates for a covering of the altar, to be a memorial unto the children of Israel, that no stranger which is not of the seed of Aaron should come near to offer incense unto the Lord.<sup>3</sup> Consequently the hereditary principle was by express commandment sanctified for these symbolic and ritual purposes, and inability to show descent from Aaron was sufficient to exclude from the priesthood.<sup>4</sup> It might have been different if the priestly functions had been of a prominently moral or spiritual kind. It is true, that after settlement in the Holy Land, the priest was regarded as the national instructor and guardian of the law of God. We read<sup>5</sup> that the Lord spake to Aaron and to his sons, as

<sup>1</sup> Numb. xvi. 20-35. Bishop Colenso (*Pentateuch and Moabite Stone*) has striven to tear the entire position to fragments, to establish the late date of the Levitical legislation, the still later introduction of the idea of the sanctity of the house of Aaron, and of any discrimination between the priests and the Levites. This is done by implying falsehood and other base motives as breathing through almost every line of the Mosaic and prophetic histories of the Old Testament. See particularly Lectures 16 and 17.

<sup>2</sup> Numb. xi. 26-29.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. xvi. 40.

<sup>4</sup> Ezra ii. 62; Neh. vii. 64; *Jos. c. Apion*, i. 7.

<sup>5</sup> Lev. x. 8-11.



a statute for all generations, that they should abstain from wine and strong drink, with other restrictions ; that they might teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the Lord had spoken unto them by the hand of Moses ; and we see in the last of the prophetic books,<sup>1</sup> that “ the priests’ lips should keep knowledge, that they (Israel) should seek the law at his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts.” There are instances given of dereliction from this high duty, nor should the sublime scene of public humiliation be forgotten when the Levites read the law in the hearing of the people, and offered the marvellous prayer and praise contained in Nehemiah ix. These ministerial duties had peculiar reference to the ceremonial law, and to questions of casuistry, ritual, or controversy.<sup>2</sup> All these services are clearly referred to by Ezekiel,<sup>3</sup> and they were coupled with minute ceremonial restrictions of diet and dress. “ They shall teach my people the difference between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the clean and unclean. And in controversy they shall stand in judgment ; and they shall judge it according to my judgments : they shall keep my laws and statutes in all my assemblies, and they shall hallow my Sabbaths.” Moses, in his general summary of the duties and destinies of the tribes,<sup>4</sup> when blessing Levi, said, “ They shall teach Jacob thy judgment and Israel thy law.” In the great reformation, in the days of Hezekiah, we remark the eagerness of the Levites to discharge the duties of

<sup>1</sup> Mal. ii. 1-7.

<sup>2</sup> See Deut. xxi. 5 ; so also xvii. 8-12, where they are said to show the sentence of judgment in hard cases ; and xxxi. 10-13, to recite the law once in seven years at the Feast of Tabernacles.

<sup>3</sup> Ezek. xlv. 23, 24.

<sup>4</sup> Deut. xxxiii. 8-12.



the family of Aaron, and the higher devotedness of the tribe as a whole as compared with the official and consecrated priests.<sup>1</sup> "The Levites were more upright in heart to sanctify themselves than the priests."

"The priests the Levites" were not limited to sacrificial or to occasional ministerial duties; they were the body-guard of the tabernacle and the temple, and were accustomed to bear arms in defence and protection of religious rites.<sup>2</sup> The tribe of Levi began its career with the treacherous slaughter of the Shechemites. It was by the javelin that Phinehas asserted the Divine vengeance, made an atonement for the vile sin of his brethren, and secured for himself "the covenant of an everlasting priesthood."<sup>3</sup> So we find the sons of Obededom able to keep ward in the house of the Lord;<sup>4</sup> so did Azariah the priest, with fourscore priests of Jehovah that were valiant men.<sup>5</sup> Their musical instruments were warlike, and they blew the blast on rams' horns and silver trumpets, and shouted the war-cry, "Rise up, O Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered." Hophni and Phinehas fell in battle. Abiathar, Zadok, Ahimaaz, Benaiah, the priests, were all warriors. The priests were the trumpeters of Abijah's army.<sup>6</sup> Jehoiada gained his victory over Athaliah with a cohort of priests. The Maccabees were priests;<sup>7</sup> Josephus,

<sup>1</sup> "The teaching functions of the priest have," says a writer in Smith's *Dict.*, "probably been unduly magnified by writers like Michaelis, who aim at bringing the institutions of Israel to the standard of modern expediency (*Comm. on Laws of Moses*, i. 35-52), as they have been unduly depreciated by Jahn and Saalchütz." See Oehler, in Herzog's *Encyc.* Jost, *Geschichte des Judenthums*, i. 148, urges that the rise of the order of scribes under EZRA, to whose special care was entrusted the preservation and interpretation of the law, and who were not confined to the Levitical tribe, had the tendency to confine the sacerdotal functions to ritual, and to limit the moral and intellectual duties of the priesthood.

<sup>2</sup> Exod. xxxii. 26, 27; Dean Stanley's *Lectures*, series ii. pp. 407-410.

<sup>3</sup> Numb. xxv. 11.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Chron. xxvi. 6-13.

<sup>5</sup> 2 Chron. xxvi. 17.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. xiii. 12.

<sup>7</sup> 2 Macc. viii. 1.



the defender of Jotapata, was a priest as well as a historian; and through the entire life of our Lord we see how actively the priesthood combined with and wielded the secular power to carry out their purposes of envy, hatred, and malice. They were not the aged, worn out, exhausted members of the sacred tribe that were on active service: they were permitted to commence their ministrations at twenty, and were not allowed to continue after they were fifty years of age.<sup>1</sup> Hence the reference in Psalm cx., thus translated by Delitzsch; "Thy people are most willing on thy field day, in holy festive garments. Out of the womb of the morning cometh the dew of thy youth." They had need of muscular strength, of youthful energy, of brave heart, and fiery zeal, to fulfil the duties assigned to them. From the time that they declared against the worshippers of the golden calf, until the fall of Jerusalem, "the priest the Levite" makes his frequent appearance as the stern avenger of national apostacy; as deaf to all pleadings of pity or of nature, as uncompromising in his denunciation of idolatry, and in his vindication of the sanctity of the law. The priests exacted the fiercest vengeance on all who trifled with their theocratic order; and as Moses said of Levi, "he said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children: for they have observed thy word, and kept thy covenant."

The specific duties of the priests, the vicarious approach to God by sacrificial rites, on behalf of the entire people, created for them a vast and complicated

<sup>1</sup> The physical strength and completeness of the priest were matters on which great emphasis was naturally laid. Lev. xxi. 16-24. See Oehler's art. "Priestertum im A.T." Herzog's *Encyc.*



round of service, which was neither ministerial nor military. It was wholly independent of the moral instruction of the people or the subjective condition of the priest. They had to do certain things which no other members of the sacred nation were at liberty to perform. They were ceremonially fitted and providentially honoured to take into the presence of God the gifts and sacrifices of the people, and to bring back from the Lord His benediction and absolution. A ceremonial of cleansing and sacrificial atonement for their own sins and imperfections, was in the first place laid down, so that the dim symbol might be given of a spotless and sinless nature prepared for high vicarious duties. This was followed by investiture in the costly robes in which their individuality was lost, and the type was thus supplied of a mediatorial function that could only be adequately realized when the true High Priest should come, whose Divine person should be clothed with human nature, who should enter into the heavenly places, having obtained eternal redemption for all the royal priesthood. The sacrificial atonement made for all the sins of the priest himself, at his dedication to the office, was repeated once every year, on the Day of Atonement, in order to cancel all the iniquity and uncleanness of the entire priesthood which might have been previously unnoticed; while "the demand for sinlessness was further symbolically expressed in the demand for physical perfection, as the indispensable prerequisite to any active participation in the service of the priesthood."<sup>1</sup>

It is foreign to the purpose of these lectures to describe the various kinds of offerings that a priest thus

<sup>1</sup> Kurtz, *Sacrificial Worship of the Old Testament*, p. 37; Lev. xxi. 16-24.



consecrated was permitted to present. The majority of them consisted of bloody offerings, made in whole or in part by fire unto Jehovah. The offerings were the recognition of the responsibility of the whole people; and they felt, in all the symbolic ritual of the priesthood, that they were themselves represented and recapitulated in the sacrificing priest. He was in the first place himself a sacrifice, a victim on which they had laid their hands for this purpose. The jewelled breastplate, with the names of the tribes engraven upon it, was a perpetual memorial of the whole people when it was borne by the high priest into the holy place; and all the revolting rites of the temple service must have continually reminded the worshippers that, even in his daily ministry, the priest was relieving the people of responsibilities of almost intolerable offensiveness. The killing of the first-born of oxen, of sheep, and of rams, in the huge shambles of the temple courts; the perpetual moan of the tethered cattle; the pouring out of the blood, the red symbol of the offered and sacrificed life; the removal of the reeking entrails; the attention necessary to the great altar of burnt-offering; the vast banqueting tables, where the priests were living on "the sin" of the people; the august ceremonial of the Passover and of the great Day of Atonement; to say nothing of all the minute directions with reference to the "sin-offering," the "burnt-offering," the "peace-offering," the "trespass-offering," as well as to the bloodless sacrifices, all combined to confer the dignity of a special caste upon the Jewish priest. He had certain ministerial and military duties, but he had mainly to perform in the sight of the people an acted parable, which he was not called



on to explain, but which was capable of enforcing some very solemn and awful lessons. In the presentation of the sin-offering, the burnt-offering, and the peace-offering, there was alike the presentation of the victim, the imposition of hands with the transfer of guilt, the expression of dedication to the will of Jehovah, and the slaughtering of the animal. The sprinkling of the blood, either on the horns of the altar, or towards the veil of the holiest of all, or on certain occasions on the Mercy-seat, was the culminating act of the sin-offering, and kept alive the sense of the need of expiation and justification; the burning of the whole or part of the victim was the culminating point of "the burnt-offering," and expressed the duty of self-surrender to Jehovah; while the "sacrificial meal," which was the grand and special peculiarity of "the peace-offering," represented the idea of communion and fellowship with the reconciled Jehovah.<sup>1</sup> It is only too certain that familiarity with a ritual like this must have had a strange and perilous influence over a great proportion of those who engaged in its performance. The awful holiness of Jehovah, which needed for His service the perpetual recognition of violated law and of offered life, and which symbolized consecration to His service by the holocaust of the bleeding lamb, became, as we know, obscured by the mere ritual. The religious significance of the temple service was veiled amid the riot and feasting of multitudes, and amid the harsh thoughts of God engendered by semi-barbarous ceremonies. Nevertheless, the psalmists and prophets who denounced the profanation, and used language which might savour of open antagonism

<sup>1</sup> Kurtz, *Sac. Sys. O. T.*, p. 174, ff.



to the ritual, were not blind to the real and typical meaning of the sacrifices. Thus the grand utterance of Asaph in the fiftieth Psalm, which is sometimes treated as a burning denunciation of the bloody sacrifice, as a refusal on the part of God to justify the hecatomb or the burnt-offering, declares that "the mighty Elohim" had called together, for special instruction, those that had made a covenant with Him by sacrifice. Again, we find in the fifty-first Psalm the sobbing of a broken heart, and, moreover, the wounds of such a heart as David's healed by the conviction that its contrition was the "sacrifice" which God would accept. Strong as was the feeling of the Psalmist, that the moral element transcends the ceremonial, yet the Psalm closes with a prayer and a promise which show that the priestly functions and the whole burnt-offering were still imperative and indispensable.<sup>1</sup> So Isaiah denounces mere ritualism in his first chapter, and the author of chapter liii. uses its symbolism to denote the sublimest aspects of the servant of God. The author of chapter lxvi. makes mention of personal sacrifice, of the blending of the offerer with the victim, and of the offering of the people, sanctified from all nations, unto the Lord, as resembling the offering which the children of Israel bring in a clean vessel into the house of the Lord; and, saith the Lord, "I will also take of them for priests and Levites."<sup>2</sup> Moreover, Ezekiel when he describes

<sup>1</sup> De Wette, Delitzsch, and many others, maintain the integrity of Psalm li., and conclude that the closing verses are not out of harmony with the spirit which breathes through the earlier verses.

<sup>2</sup> This argument is of no avail with those who refer the oracles of Isaiah to several authors, nor with those who simply separate the first thirty-nine chapters from the rest of the book. Still, the spiritual significance put upon the sacrificial symbolism — at a time when the priestly work was, in the opinion of modern critics, creating the books of Chronicles and Leviticus, and interlarding the whole canon with sacerdotal fictions — is very remarkable.



the glory of the latter days, not only portrays the dimensions and ornaments, the courts and the altar of the holy temple, but the ordinances for the priests and the law of the burnt-offering,<sup>1</sup> with every detail of the temple service. When Amos<sup>2</sup> bursts forth in the name of the Lord with vehement detestation of the sacrificial service, it should be remembered that he was a prophet to *Israel*, and was there speaking, primarily, not of the temple worship, but of the rival calf worship of Bethel, and of a ceremonial service that was dividing the unity of the altar, and blending Egyptian and Phœnician idolatry with the worship of Jehovah.

Functions of transcendent importance were performed by the Jewish priest, and he was the last of the great national institutions of Israel to disappear in the fire and blood of the closing days of its national life.<sup>3</sup>

All religions based on the localisation of Deity, on the sanctity of *things*, or on fetishism in any form, however refined, have required the consecration either of a caste or order of men to perform the rites and celebrate the mysteries demanded by such a belief. As the moral element entered more and more strongly into religious ideas and worship, and consequently threw the ceremonial into the background, or left it only a secondary place, priestly perfunctoriness gave way to prophetic impulses, and the principle of an *order* began to develop itself, first within the enclosure of the hereditary caste, and then altogether independently of it. So we find it in the

<sup>1</sup> Ezek. xliii. xlv.

<sup>2</sup> Amos v. 21-27.

<sup>3</sup> "The Hebrew priesthood witnessed the fall of the Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, and Greek empires. It formed the rallying point of the Jewish nation in the immense void of the return from the Captivity, in the death-struggle with Antiochus; and in the last agony of the nation, the high-priesthood is the last institution visible before the final crash of the system."

—Dean Stanley, *Lectures on Jewish Church*, sec. series, p. 427.



history of Greek religion and priesthoods:—so also in the protest made by Buddhism against the Hindu system which treated special races of men as peculiarly related to Deity. The sublime conception of “humanity” as being, in all its various nations and individuals, equally acceptable to God, is closely associated with the doctrine of the personal access of every soul to the eternal Father, and therefore cuts at the root of the priestly functions of either caste or class. If God is *everywhere*, and at *all* times accessible to man, then no ceremonial performed by a special man or class of men can be permanently required. There was a time when the most favoured people of antiquity were being taught the lesson of God’s sanctity and nearness, and the method by which the judicial barrier that separated between God and man should be ultimately done away. There was a period in the Divine education of the race, when temple, altar, sacrifice, blood, incense, and divers purifications were all necessary to awaken the consciousness of God, the sense of sin, the knowledge of the curse of separation from God; and during the whole of this period the priest was necessary to teach, to conserve, and to enforce these lessons, to keep up a living parable of the way in which, eventually, all might behold the glory of the Lord with unveiled face. Though a conviction of helplessness and ignorance tends to obliterate the sense of individual responsibility, yet before conscience has responded to the call for personal consecration, and so long as men entertain dread suspicions of the character of God, and shrink from direct communion with Him, they will throw upon a priesthood the obligations really incumbent upon themselves. So was it with the people of Jehovah.



Carnal ordinances of this class were imposed upon Israel until a LIFE should be enacted before their eyes of such sanctity and comprehensiveness, that it would contain within itself all the significance of the temple and the Shekinah; until One should come who would Himself be the Priest and the Victim, the offering and the offerer, the altar and the fire; who would at once provide the blood and the incense, the holy place and the veil, and be Himself the Sabbath, the Passover, the Atonement, and the Jubilee—all the defence, all the shield, all the sword that the kingdom of God on earth would require. The mystery of His life, the fulness of its meaning and office, would not have been perceived apart from this agelong preparation for Him. He became the fulfilment of the hope that was cherished and expressed in all the costly and mysterious ceremonial of Judaism, and the comprehensive and conclusive answer to the questionings which had been propounded in the priesthoods of all nations.

It is worthy of peculiar attention that JOHN should have been carefully set forth as the son of Zacharias, and therefore as one of the last representatives of the Aaronic priesthood; that he should have been a conspicuous exponent of the law of hereditary sanctity and prescriptive religiousness; that his prophetic calling, like that of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, should have expanded and developed itself on a sacerdotal basis; if only that we might see with more distinctness one at least of the meanings of the Lord's own language,—“Among them that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: nevertheless, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.”



The priestly characteristics, to which attention has been called, will account for some of the features of the son of Zacharias. There is no proof that it ever fell to his lot to burn incense in the temple ; that he ever put on the linen ephod or the gorgeous robe of the officiating priest ; or that he ever lifted knife to slay the sacrificial victim : still he alone, among all the immediate contemporaries of our Lord, was explicit in his reference to the expiatory character of Christ's work, in those memorable words, " Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." We have no proof that he went through the long and elaborate lustrations required from the priesthood before the performance of any of their special functions ; yet it is highly instructive that the historic origin of baptism should date from his ministry, and that he should have summoned all men indiscriminately to the reception of ceremonial cleansing. The consecration of the whole tribe of Levi to the service of the tabernacle, involved the principle that the priest was himself the offering of the whole people, and that the high priest was the offering of the entire Aaronic family. John's special consecration to God from his birth, receives illustration from this incident in the history of his house. It was because he had been himself theoretically " made an offering to God as by fire, for all the people in all their tribes," and had deeply pondered it, that he referred with such startling emphasis to the priestly and sacrificial character of God's Lamb. The teaching function of " the priest the Levite " would form the basis of his prophetic duties. It was by Divine enactment the hereditary function of John to teach God's people the difference between the holy and



the profane, to cause them to discern between the clean and the unclean, and in controversy to stand in judgment, answering the question from lawyers, soldiers, and scribes,—“Master, what shall we do?”—to judge according to Jehovah’s judgment, to keep His laws, and to hallow His Sabbaths.<sup>1</sup> The same relation explains the special injunction given by the angel to Zacharias, with reference to his being a Nazarite from his birth. “Neither shall they shave their heads, nor suffer their locks to grow long, . . . neither shall any priests drink wine when they enter the inner court.”<sup>2</sup> We shall have occasion presently to deal with the lifelong vow of asceticism laid upon John, but the character of it is obviously derived from the consecration of the priest for his august and solemn duties. John was *always* to be characterized by a separation from worldly ways, which only occasionally was demanded from the priest who was chosen by lot for the discharge of these high functions. Still further, the military character of the Jewish priesthood may do something to explain the uncompromising tone with which in the first instance he made his appeal to the consciences of the people and princes, to Pharisees and Sadducees, to soldiers, publicans, and harlots. He probably learned much of his vehement speech from the traditions of the sons of Levi. He belonged to that fierce tribe which had, on certain occasions, by deeds of bloody vengeance, proclaimed itself “on the Lord’s side.” We do not know that he carried a sword or sacrificial knife beneath his robe of camel’s hair, or suspended from his leathern girdle; but we do know that he spoke of summary testing processes, of “the

<sup>1</sup> See Ezek. xliv. 23, 24.<sup>2</sup> Ibid. xliv. 21; cf. Lev. x. 9; xxi. 5.



axe" at the root of all trees, of the destruction of those that were fruitless, and of the burning up of useless chaff with unquenchable fire.<sup>1</sup> His austerity of demeanour induced some of the fickle crowd to cry, "He hath a devil;"<sup>2</sup> and the hardness and vehemence of his denunciations of certain vices led to his imprisonment and death. Much then which was peculiar to John's career finds a justification and an explanation in some of the known characteristics of the priestly order.

The declaration of our Lord, that among those of woman born there had not risen a greater than John the Baptist, pointed (not obscurely) to his hereditary dignity as a priest, and to the circumstance that, like other great prophetic priests, he had looked beyond the order or the caste to which he belonged. Nevertheless, when He added, "he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he," it was equivalent to the assertion that the kingdom of heaven on earth was established on a different basis, and He uttered the spiritual principle that all the people were holiness to the Lord. The priest with his ceremonial duties, his material temple, and his "ministration of death," had once had a work to do, an office to fulfil, a glory of his own, which glory was to be done away; but the Aaronic priesthood would henceforth have no glory by reason of the glory which excelleth. Hence in the New Testament and in apostolic practice no provision was made for the reproduction of the priestly office. The entire body of believers was described as a "royal priesthood."<sup>3</sup> All the members of the Church in Rome were besought to offer themselves as "living sacri-

<sup>1</sup> Matt. iii. 10, 12.<sup>2</sup> Ibid. xi. 18.<sup>3</sup> 1 Pet. ii. 5-9.



fices,"<sup>1</sup> holy and acceptable to God. All the members of the entire seven Churches of Asia are described as having been made priests and kings<sup>2</sup> unto God; but no reference in the New Testament can be twisted into the proof that any order of men existed in the Christian Church who arrogated to themselves the right to offer spiritual sacrifices for their brethren, or vicariously to present themselves before the Lord on their behalf. Apostles, prophets, bishops, presbyters, pastors, evangelists, teachers, angels, deacons, ministers, and servants of the Church are referred to, but never on a single occasion do we find them regarded as officially interchangeable with the old and established order of *ιερείς*. Nor is the Christian ministry ever entrusted with the function of mediating between God and man, nor represented as exercising the prerogative of absolution or forgiveness of sin. Christian worship and institutions were fashioned, not on the model of the temple, with its localised Deity and sacred things, its sacrificial rites and brazen altar, but on that of the synagogue, the place where the already existing *ecclesia* assembled for worship, for prayer and praise, for reading the Word of God, and listening to expository comment.<sup>3</sup> It would be beside my present purpose to develop the rise and growth of the

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xii. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. i. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Jacob, *Ecclesiastical Polity of the New Testament*, selects from Vitringa's exhaustive treatise on *The Synagogue* the long list of similarities between the Christian Church and the Synagogue in matters where there was conspicuous disagreement with the Temple system. (1) The names of office-bearers; (2) the multiplicity, not unity, of place of worship; (3) no different degrees of sanctity; (4) absence of special vestments; (5) open ministry, &c. See also *Catholic Thoughts on the Church of Christ and the Church of England*, by Fred. Meyers, pp. 86-95; *Christian Sacerdotalism viewed from a Layman's Standpoint*, by John Jardine, LL.D. 1871; Archbishop Whately on *The Kingdom of Christ Delineated*, p. 108; the dissertation of Professor Lightfoot in his *Commentary on Epistle to the Philippians*; *The Christian Ministry*—"The Ministry not a Priesthood." Rev. Thomas Binney.



priestly assumptions of the Christian minister. It is unquestionable that very early the germs of sacerdotalism made their appearance; that there are traces, even in the writings of the genuine apostolic fathers, of the claim which the Christian pastor was making to represent the authority and discharge the duties of the Old Testament priest.<sup>1</sup> The sacerdotal tone of the so-called Ignatian Epistles, though these documents do not possess the antiquity which the Pseudo-Ignatius claimed for them, reflects the spirit of the close of the second century. It is however very remarkable, that notwithstanding the fulsome method adopted to extol the episcopal order over that of the presbyterate, yet no undoubted proof occurs of the adoption even by this writer of the sacerdotal nomenclature for the Christian ministry.<sup>2</sup>

Justin Martyr<sup>3</sup> vindicates for all Christians the functions of the *high priest*, in virtue of their union with the great High Priest, "the first-born son of God;" and even Irenæus, a generation later, acknowledges only "a priesthood of moral holiness, a priesthood of apostolic self-denial;" whilst Clement of Alexandria abstains from any reference of priestly titles or functions to the Christian ministry. Tertullian was the first to hold a sacerdotal view of the Christian ministry. He restricts the right of administering baptism to the *summus sacerdos qui est episcopus*, although he subsequently modifies

<sup>1</sup> Clemens Romanus, 1 *Ep. ad Cor.* caps. xl. xli., reveals some attempt to father on the Christian Church the limitations and orders of the Jewish priesthood. But while he refers to these priestly functions he does, as Professor Lightfoot observes, "keep the names and the offices distinct." Polycarp has an opportunity of introducing the confusion, but "he says nothing of any sacerdotal privileges which claimed respect, or of any sacerdotal sanctity which had been violated."

<sup>2</sup> Compare here Jardine, l.c. pp. 54-89, with Lightfoot, l.c. p. 249. Greenwood, *Cathedra Petri*, i. p. 73.

<sup>3</sup> *Dial. c. Tryp.* c. 116, 117.



the statement;<sup>1</sup> and Origen, while urging a spiritual interpretation of the priesthood, specially applies its phraseology to the ministry. Cyprian, on the other hand, boldly transfers to the ministry the titles, dignities, and duties of the Aaronic priesthood.<sup>2</sup> From this time forward the most rapid development takes place. The well-known treatise of Chrysostom, *De Sacerdotio*, shows how completely the identification of the priesthood and the ministry had taken place, how awful were the responsibilities, how tremendous the mysteries of the Christian priest.<sup>3</sup> The Lord's Supper becomes a mystery and ministry more awful than Elijah's on Mount Carmel, a sacrifice which the Christian priest rather than a Christian community can offer. Absolution and remission of sins against God, as well as against the Church, are entrusted to a sacrificing priesthood; a new fetishism has developed itself in the house of Christian assembly. The model of the temple is substituted for that of the primitive synagogue, and the dogma or fiction of apostolic succession and of sacramental order begins to be treated as an essential condition of the unity of the Church.

The formidable organization of the Levitical priesthood fell to the ground with the extinction of the Jewish temple. Both had done their work when they had been instrumental in explaining and illustrating some of the boundless powers entrusted to Him who was greater than the temple, and who once for all discharged the functions of High Priest of humanity. It cannot be denied that the temple preserved to men the truth of the presence of the Lord of the whole earth;

<sup>1</sup> *De Baptismo*, c. 17.

<sup>2</sup> *Epp.* 3. 4. 43. 54. 59. 64. 66; *De Unitate Ecclesiæ*, c. 17, and many other places.

<sup>3</sup> *Lib.* ii. c. 4.



that the Levitical order quickened the sense of sin, exalted the notion of the holiness that was becoming in the worshipper, by continually drawing the distinction between the clean and the unclean. The conscience thus stimulated, was aroused from utter torpor into activity, and did its part in preserving to the world the awful sense of righteousness. The blessing of the people, the absolution, the bloody sacrifice, the holy incense, and the weird ceremonials of the great feasts, were for many ages the conservers of historic facts, and witnesses to the reality that Jehovah is slow to anger, ready to forgive, and mighty to save. It is, therefore, all the more remarkable, that concerning the only distinguished New Testament character who is known to belong to the family of Aaron, the only man of whose priestly birth we have any assurance whatever,—the Master should have said, “He that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.”

I admit that through the dark conflicts of Paganism with Christianity, when Catholic truth was threatened by the bigotry of Arian emperors, and during the centuries when civilization was surrounded on all sides with aggressive barbarism, the close order and corporate institutions developed in the theory and practice of Christian priestcraft had a providential work to do, and were by no means an unmixed evil. In fact, monarchies, aristocracies, corporations, hereditary rank, jealously guarded privilege, have had a work to do for human nature, such as it is. Honour and office invested with supernatural powers have responded to the unspirituality of worldly tastes. The willingness of the multitude to relinquish irksome duty, to acquiesce in undemonstrable claims, has provoked priesthoods into



activity, and has almost condoned the assumptions and devices of priestcraft. Thus the wrath of man is made to praise Jehovah, and the follies and even the sins of men are overruled by the infinite grace of God. Similarly, we dare not assert that in the days when the unprotected serf could not otherwise have maintained his right to live, feudalism was an unmixed curse ; or that slavery, when introduced as a substitute for the indiscriminate slaughter of all the victims of successful warfare, had no educational or protecting work to do. We place slaveries and priesthoods on the same ethical plane, as alike involving fearful possibilities, which were endured for a while, by reason of certain secondary advantages; they were doubtful expedients for doing a certain amount of good. They belong alike to the childhood and to the dotage of society, not to its youth or manhood. The least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than the proudest priest, as such. The institution of priestly order, dignity, and power, was fulfilled in Christ, and in the grace of His outpoured Spirit. The resuscitation of the dead priesthood was part of a melancholy despiritualization of Christianity, a return to the beggarly elements of the world. It would have been just as reasonable and more impressive to have stolen from Judaism the defunct rites of circumcision and bloody sacrifice. The argument that Christian ministers are representative of the whole Christian body,<sup>1</sup> and thus have a priestly function corresponding with that of the Aaronic priesthood towards the holy nation, contains its own refutation, in the

<sup>1</sup> *Tracts for the Day*, by various authors, edited by Rev. Orby Shipley, p. 133, where the Korah and Dathan argument is elaborated with much unction. Indeed, every page of this volume is devoted to the establishment of the transcendental qualities of God's priests of the Anglican branch of the Catholic Church.



manifest incompatibility of the representation. How can one man offer the *spiritual* sacrifice which it is the duty of every man to present for himself? The function of the ideal priest could only be fulfilled by One whose power, understanding, and sympathy were infinite. Well said the last illustrious priest of the house of Aaron, "He must increase ; I must decrease."

## § 2. *The Jewish Ascetic.*

### I. The Nazarite.

If the priestly rank of John is open to question, there can be none with regard to his ascetic and solitary life.<sup>1</sup> The Evangelist calls attention to the fact that he was to resemble "a Nazarite from his birth ;" that he was habitually to do what the high priest and the sons of Aaron were compelled by law to do, when they were engaged in the performance of ceremonial rites. It was predicted that the life of this man should be not only a perpetual priesthood, but the perpetual discharge of priestly duties.<sup>2</sup> The Nazarite was a link of connection between the priesthood of the Old Covenant and the priesthood of consecration to the will of God. We find that John could live up to the ideal which angelic voices had assigned to him only by rushing into the desert, and there cultivating the stern virtues of abstinence. The angel announced to Zacharias concerning the child of his old age, "He shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong

<sup>1</sup> Das einzig Geschichtliche in dieser Darstellung ist wohl der Zug dass Johannes ein Naziräerleben geführt d. h. zu der Essäern gehört hat.—Grätz, *Geschichte der Juden*, iii. Bd. 220.

<sup>2</sup> Philo, *De Victim*, § 13 ; Maimonides, *More Nevochim*, iii. 48 ; Mischna, *Nasir*, vii. 1, where Num. vi. 5, ff., is brought into relation with Lev. xxi, 11. See Grätz, l.c. p. 80. Eine art freiwilliger Priester.



drink, and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb."<sup>1</sup> We learn further that "the child grew, and was in the deserts until the day of his public and official appearance to Israel."<sup>2</sup> We have the assurance of Matthew and Mark that his dress and food were of the coarsest description, the latter such as was appreciated and used only by the very poorest of the population. "He was clothed with," he had "raiment of [Matthew] camel's hair" (the rough hairy garment worn by the recluse and the prophet).<sup>3</sup> He had a leathern girdle about his loins, and his nourishment (τροφή) was locusts and wild honey."<sup>4</sup> The Lord Jesus

<sup>1</sup> Luke i. 15.<sup>2</sup> Ibid. i. 80.<sup>3</sup> Zech xiii. 4. δέρον τριχίνην.

<sup>4</sup> Many of the early expositors endeavoured to explain away the fact that locusts were the food of John. Even the Gospel of the Ebionites, quoted by Epiphanius, *Hær.* xxx. p. 138, A., confounds ἀκρίδες, locusts, with ἐγκρίδες, cakes made of manna with oil. This substitution was denounced by Epiphanius. Others have supposed that the pods of the "locust-tree" (*Ceratonia siliqua*), still called "St. John's bread" by the monks of Palestine, were referred to. Others have imagined that καρίδες, "shrimps," ought to have been the reading. Hase, in his *Leben Jesu*, § 44, refers to six or seven learned dissertations published in the seventeenth century "de victu et amictu Johannis Baptistæ," and specializes Conrade Olte, Andr. Glauch, Chremnitzius, Stolberg, Paul Rabe. The article in Winer's *Realwörterb.*, "Heuschrecke," and those in Smith's *Dictionary* on "Locust," and in Kitto's *Cyclopædia* on "Arbeh," "Chagab," "Chargol," "Saleam," "Gazam," "Gob," and "Yelek" (Hebrew words translated by ἀκρις, βρῶνχος, ἀττακός, ἀττελάβος, ἐρυσίβη in LXX.), give much valuable information. Winer considers גֹּב, "Gob," to be the generic name for the whole race of locusts. The word, however, only occurs three times in the Hebrew Bible,—Amos vii. 1; Nahum iii. 17; Isa. xxxiii. 4. The word אֲרֵבָה, "Arbeh," occurs twenty times in the Hebrew Bible, and is rendered in LXX. by the four Greek words mentioned above. It is expressly noticed for its predatory powers, but is expressly mentioned (Lev. xi. 22) as an article of food; so also is the סַלְמַנָּה, "Saleam," translated by LXX. by ἀττακός, and "bald locust" in A.V. The descriptions of this creature in the Talmud are said to be unrecognisable in any known species. The חַרְגֹּל, "chargol," is also given for food, Lev. xi. 22, where ὀφιομάχης stands in LXX., and "beetle" in A.V. See art. "Chargol," in Kitto's *Cyc.* These two words occur nowhere else in the Bible. The last kind mentioned is כַּגָּב, "chagab." In Num. xiii. 33 this word, translated ἀκρις in LXX., seems chosen from its diminutiveness. It occurs Isa. xl. 22 and 2 Chron. vii. 13. It is translated "locust" in this last place in A.V., but by "grasshopper" elsewhere. Identification with known species is very hazardous. Kalisch, on Lev. xi. 22, dis-



Christ, moreover, when speaking to the multitudes concerning John, said: "What went ye out into the wilderness to gaze upon? a reed shaken by the wind? but what went ye out to see? a man clothed round with soft (luxurious) raiment? Behold they who wear soft things are in the palaces of kings."<sup>1</sup> Again our Lord declares: "John came neither eating nor drinking," and tells us that the effect upon the people was, "They say he hath a devil." These hints and express declarations enable us to picture to ourselves the son of Zacharias. There was some outward resemblance to the appearance and manners of the mysterious Elijah. The older recluse was described as "a hairy man, and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins."<sup>2</sup> His home was often in

cusses at great length what he describes as the error of the author of Leviticus in speaking of the four (instead of six) legs of these insects, and supports by this passage the theory of the late origin of the Levitical legislation, showing with much ingenuity that the author wanted a place to introduce a justification of the custom of eating "locusts," which was virtually forbidden by Deut. xiv. 19, and he found it here. This speculation need not detain us. It is certain, from the time of the composition of Leviticus, whether it were the earliest or latest book of the canon, that locusts were an article of food, and believed by John to be ceremonially clean. See also Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* vi. 35; Diod. *Sic.* iii. 29; Jerome, *Adv. Jovinian.* ii. 6. They are treated in many ways; dried in the sun and sold in the markets; cooked in a great variety of methods; ground into flour and made into bread; and are often the source of nourishment for whole tribes. The Jews in *Yemen* buy and eat them freely. Dr. Kitto, *Pict. Bible*, note Lev. xi. 22, says that as food they supply an antidote to the evils they cause. Burckhardt, *Notes on Bedouins and Wahabys*, vol. ii. 92, says they are eaten by the Bedouins (not, however, by the Bedouins of the peninsula of Sinai); in Egypt and Nubia only by the poorest beggars. Dr. Thomson, *Land and Book*, says they are tolerated only by the poorest of the people. Robinson, *Bib. Res.* ii. 625, gives a similar judgment, and declares that his own Arabs would not touch them. Lange quotes similar facts from Niebuhr, *Reise*, i. 402. There is no record, that I know, of the Essenes partaking of the food. The μέλι ἄγριον was honey made by wild bees, in which Palestine abounded, Exod. iii. 8; 1 Sam. xiv. 25. Josephus, *B. J.* iv. 8. 3, speaking of the plain of Jericho, says that the palm-trees when pressed exude honey; but he adds, "the country produces honey from bees." Zorn, Kuinoel, Fritsche, and others, suppose the "wild honey" to have been of purely vegetable origin. There were clearly both kinds in the wilderness of Judæa.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xi. 7, 8, ff.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Kings i. 8.



the clefts of the rocks and the wilds of the desert, or on the top of the mountains, where he wielded with terrible freedom the forces of nature for the confusion of his enemies and the vindication of the honour of Jehovah. The home of John was in the wilderness, his manners were abrupt, even when confronted with all the majesty of the Sanhedrim or with the despotic power of the tetrarch of Galilee. His food and dress suggested the very opposite of cultivation or comfort, and corresponded with those of the traditional ascetic. Deprived from his birth of all vinous stimulus, with the vows of the Lord upon him, charged with the excitement of spiritual thoughts, and "filled with the Holy Ghost," he differed from every other character in the New Testament. He kept his body in subjection by rough and harsh means. He mortified the flesh by crushing some of his natural instincts. He waxed "strong in spirit" by the severe physical discipline which allows little or no place for the wants of the body.

There are two institutions of Judaism which may throw some light upon this feature of his career, though, notwithstanding very confident assertion to the contrary, there is no positive proof that he was formally associated with either. I refer to the vow of the Nazarene, and the sect of the Essenes. The tendencies at work in each of these institutions are older than Judaism, and have outlived it. They are each of them expressions of a deep-seated conviction that the deliverance of the whole man from evil is almost identical with the deliverance of the spirit from the power or contaminations of the flesh. They rest upon the thesis which has ever exerted signal influence over the Ori-



ental mind, that the seat of evil is not the soul nor the will so much as the flesh of man; that the flesh derives its corruption from the main physical and material conditions of its continuance; that the material universe is the *evil* principle; that it is divorced from good; that creation consequently, so far from being the work of the supreme God, is rather the questionable and immoral activity of the *κοσμος*; that the demiurge is the enemy of God rather than the energy of Supreme Intelligence. This speculation may be seen carried to its extreme form in Persian Dualism and some forms of Hindu asceticism. The philosophical schools of India, almost without exception, are based upon the supposed antagonism between the virtues and the flesh.<sup>1</sup> Gnosticism, in almost all its forms, involved some philosophical exposition of this antithesis, which was believed to be a well demonstrated fact, although the Gnostic sects were all strongly affected by the novel conception of redemption supplied to them by Christianity, and aimed in various ways to explain the method by which "a fallen creation may be restored to its original source."<sup>2</sup> Many Christian speculations and some Christian institutions are still penetrated through and through with the hypothesis that evil is inherent in matter, and has its seat in the body and in the physical constitution of humanity. It is not difficult to trace the presence of the same tendency in the

<sup>1</sup> The *Sāṅkhya* philosophy of Kōpila, and the fundamental position of Sakya-Muni, is that all evil arises from "the union between soul and nature." The *Nyaya* system of Gautam aims similarly at the emancipation of the soul from the body, to destroy "the fault of desire and dislike." The *Vedānta* philosophy of Vyasa, as seen in his *Sūtras* and in the poem "Bhagavad Gita," dwells with similar unction on the same kind of deliverance, terminating in absorption into Brahm. Colebrooke, *Essays on Hindu Philosophy*; Mullens, *Religious Aspects of Hindu Philosophy*.

<sup>2</sup> See Neander's *Gen. Church History*. Clark's Trans. vol. ii. p. 42, ff.



ascetic institutions of Judaism. It should be distinctly noted that the deep spiritual essence of Hebrew faith and worship was contradictory of the ascetic principle. As if to anticipate the Gnostic speculation, the book of Genesis commences with the assertion that the Jehovah of the Old Testament—the one God, the Holy and Righteous One—is the creator of the world, the creator of the matter and force of the universe; that the great powers of nature, the heavens and all their host, the earth with all its life, were willed into being by the word of Jehovah, and that He saw all the works of His hand; and, behold, they were very good. Man is created in the image and likeness of Elohim. Every relationship of life, *e. g.*, the marriage bond and bed, the relationship of father and son, the gifts of food and raiment, of the sunshine and the showers, of the olive and the vine, of the seed time and the harvest, the feast and the song,—were all capable of the highest consecration, might all become the means of grace, and were indeed signs of heavenly favour. Circumstances might alter the moral value of particular actions. The corruptions of the flesh were not the mere acceptance of the natural conditions of humanity, but the satisfaction of physical instincts in sole regard to personal and selfish interests. Hence “the joyful noise”<sup>1</sup> was the synonym for temple worship, in spite of all its sacrifices; and “when the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord began.”<sup>2</sup> “The feasts of the Lord” was the designation given to the high ceremonies of Judaism. The temporal, material prosperity of the kingdom was regarded as the main sanction of national obedience.

Whatever the Old Testament may have suggested of

<sup>1</sup> Psa. lxvi. 1; c. 1.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Chron. xxix. 27.



the consecration of earth and of man, was eclipsed by the fundamental doctrine of the New Covenant. The Incarnation was the emphatic assertion that the whole of our nature—body, soul, and spirit—could be taken up and lifted into the Divinity ; that the whole of human life was “holiness unto the Lord ;” and thus the life of our Lord was an intentional contrast to John’s life in respect of the fundamental principle of its holiness. “John came neither eating nor drinking.” “The Son of man came both eating and drinking.” He passed from His assumption and acceptance of the loftiest titles, to a marriage feast.<sup>1</sup> Natural affections and human friendships ripened in His sacred heart to the highest point of expression. At various banquets He gave utterance to His grandest teaching. He instituted a memorial of His own agony and shame, of His body that was broken, and His blood that was poured out for the remission of sins ; and it is significant that this was not a funeral march, not a repetition of the sacrifice, nor a fresh libation of the blood of beasts or men ; but it was a simple feast ; it was the “cup of blessing ;” it was constituted out of the earthly tokens and symbols of joy, fellowship, and aspiration. More than this, He rose from the dead in the body of His flesh, and left as His sublimest legacy to His Church the promise and pledge of the *anastasis* of man. It was very reasonable that “the disciples of John should *fast*.” Ascetic self-repression was the natural development of John’s doctrine and example ; but as a rule and means of grace it fell short of the new spirit of Christ : by itself it did not touch the deep springs of life. Times were coming when the children

<sup>1</sup> Comp. John i. and ii.



of the bridechamber might and would be *made* to fast, to put on John's sackcloth of hair, and forget to eat their bread; not because the hairy garment was a means of grace, nor the fasting a way of being rid of sin, but because the bridegroom would be taken from them.

We inquire, In what respects did John resemble either the Nazarite or the Essene? and how far does the testimony of Jesus to John turn upon that resemblance? The law of the Nazarite and the nature of his vow are described at length in Numb. vi., where it appears that the vow, whether of man or woman, included two things in the main: the entire abstinence from the fruit of the vine in any of its forms, and the free growth of the hair.<sup>1</sup> All vinous stimulus was stringently excluded, as well as everything "made of the vine tree, from the kernels even to the husk." "Wine, vinegar of wine, and strong drink," the fruit, fresh and dried, were alike forbidden. Hence this tree, which was the Hebrew symbol of the prosperity, life, and gladness of the holy people, was placed by this vow under the ban, as though even in the imagery of all earthly prosperity and glory there was secretly blended the symbol of the Cross. Vinous stimulus, in extreme forms of license, had been positively consecrated by other nations as a religious service, a means of securing supernatural illumination. The Greek worship of Dionysos or Bacchus combined an old Hellenic symbolic worship of Nature with a Pelasgic or Oriental element, which was at first resisted by the Greeks of

<sup>1</sup> Vitrunga, *Obs. Sacræ*, ii. p. 553. *Per Naziræos olim Deus adumbrare instituit perfectam et omnibus numeris absolutam sanctitatem, quæ infert summam libertatem ab omni concupiscentiâ et servitute qualiscunque vitii et peccati, animumque Deo in omni habitu, actu et statu devotum et consecratum.*



Thrace and Sparta. Wild excitement stimulated by wine was supposed to confer the highest revelations, and licentious orgies accompanied the worship of the gods.<sup>1</sup> The solemn glorification of the intoxicating juice of the soma plant<sup>2</sup> in Hindu ceremonial, was based on the principle that the religious life can be actually stimulated by sensuous and morbid excitement. On the other hand, the condemnation of drunkenness, the consecration of sobriety, and even the ceremonial virtue of abstinence, pervade the Hebrew legislation. Moses refers to the vow of the Nazarite as though it were well understood, and as if he were merely giving precise directions with respect to a pre-Mosaic institution. This portion of it was, as I have already said, enjoined on the priest when on the point of discharging his sacerdotal functions. The violation of the principle of the vow is bitterly denounced and condemned by the prophets.<sup>3</sup> The law of the Rechabites, which amounted to a firm and hereditary maintenance of a portion of the Nazaritic rule, receives the loftiest commendation from the prophet. The influence of the word of Jonadab, the son of Rechab, upon his sons, is contrasted by Jeremiah with the utter neglect by the people of God of the word of the Lord ; and Jehovah's language is, "Jonadab, the son of Rechab, shall not want a man to stand before me for ever."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Hom. *Il.* vi. 132 ; Hes. *Theog.* 941 ; Eurip. *Bacchæ*, v. 142, 221, 298-301 ; and Eurip. *Frag.* Kpñres, 476. See also Mure, *Crit. Hist.* i. 151 ; Donaldson's *Theatre of the Greeks*, c. ii. ; Döllinger, *Gentile and Jew*, vol. i. p. 94, ff., 155, ff ; Herzog, *Real. Enc.*, xiii. 543, xxi. 285.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Muir has thus translated the praise of the *soma* from the Rig-Veda :—  
 "We've quaffed the soma bright, and are immortal grown ;  
 We've entered into light, and all the gods have known ;"  
 quoted by Mrs. Manning, *Ancient and Mediæval India*, i. p. 69. Cf. Baring-Gould, *Development of Religious Belief*, vol. i. 409.

<sup>3</sup> Isa. xxviii. 7 ; lvi. 12 ; Amos ii. 11, 12.

<sup>4</sup> Jer. xxxv. 19.



The meaning of this phrase has been greatly discussed. The words employed are technical and liturgical in their meaning; they probably denote the special dignity conferred upon the sons of Levi in their ceremonial approach to the altar of burnt offering in the holy place; and involve the distinct promise that this tribe of men—strictly speaking not even of Jewish descent—in virtue of their constancy, faithfulness, and abstinence, and because of their separation from the ordinary practices and manners of the people with whom they had cast in their lot, were elevated by Divine command to the rank of priests. It seems, even, that the daughters of the Rechabites married Levites, and some of the chief men of the tribe were chosen to sit in the great council of the nation. All Rechabites were Nazarites for life, but all Nazarites were not Rechabites. The Rechabites were a consecrated family, mainly distinguished by the Nazaritic vow, and the peculiarity of their residence. They were pledged to a maintenance of the wilderness life. They abode in booths; they preserved a continual reminiscence of their early life and discipline. The vow of the Nazarite was compatible with more customary manners and duties. It might be temporary in its incidence, and revoked at pleasure by special ceremonial. The law of the Nazarites, as contained in Numb. vi., refers only to the temporary vow of abstinence which man or woman might take, and nothing is said of the vow for life, of which we have some striking instances in the Old Testament history, but it adds other features in which the Rechabites did not participate. I refer to the vow of allowing the hair of the head to grow freely during the period of the vow, and the solemn rites with which the sepa-



ration from the rest of their brethren might be brought to a close. The hair was shaven, and burned with fire on the altar of burnt-offering, at which the various offerings of the Nazarite, when released from his vow, were presented. Every kind of sacrifice was presented on these occasions, and the demands made upon the Nazarites were so heavy, that not infrequently the benevolence of others was appealed to, to enable them to meet the requirements. It was in this way that St. Paul, at the instigation of James and his Jewish brethren, consented to be "at charges" with the four Nazarites,<sup>1</sup> in order to prove to the excitable Jewish party in the Church that he had not, as a Hebrew of Hebrews, discarded all the ordinances of the law, even though he had maintained boldly the insignificance of these customs, and their non-incidence on those who among the Gentiles had turned unto God. There are many other illustrations of the same kind of sympathetic generosity towards those who had put themselves for different periods under the Nazaritic vow, but who were incapable of meeting the charges involved in their release. Thus Alexander Jannæus is said to have furnished means of release from their vows for many of the Nazarites.<sup>2</sup>

The mode in which the consecration of the Nazarite took place strongly resembled that of the high priest himself; and it is curious that the very same word is used in the Hebrew text to denote the uncut tuft of hair on the crown of the head of the Nazarite, and the diadem of the high priest.<sup>3</sup>

There seems at first sight no moral or religious

<sup>1</sup> Acts xxi. 23, 24.

<sup>2</sup> Jos. *Antiq.* xix. 6. 1, and *Gemara*, quoted by Smith, *Dict.* ii. 472.

<sup>3</sup> *כֵּטָם*, in Numb. vi. 19, and Lev. xxi. 12.



significance in the ceremonial of the consecration, but the idea which pervades it is that of complete surrender to the Lord, of entire devotion to His worship and service, and submission to His will. The men or women who made the self-dedication received a priestly consecration for the time of the vow, and were themselves the victims offered upon the altar of the Lord. It was impossible for them to be released without sacrificial offerings, intended to express by vicarious oblation the complete dedication of the offerer to the service of Jehovah.

The mother of Samuel dedicated her son before his birth to the career of a Nazarite for life. This may account in part for the semi-sacerdotal character of Samuel, although he was not a descendant of Aaron, but only a member of the family of Kohath.<sup>1</sup> It formed in his case the basis of a prophetic mission, but for a while he ministered before the Lord, under the direction of the high priest, and departed not from the tabernacle. The asceticism, and other peculiarities of Samuel's position and congenital consecration, led him from the first to be the uncompromising foe of corruption, disobedience, and profligacy. Before he dropped the name of "the child Samuel," he received heavenly warnings, and was commissioned to denounce the licentiousness, and to prophesy the doom of the house of Eli. He rose to the loftiest position as a seer of the mysteries of Providence, and as a civil and military leader; he reluctantly yielded to the wish of the people for a more settled form of government, but occupying a position higher than that of priest or judge or king, he was feared, consulted, and obeyed.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Sam. i. 1; 1 Chron. vi. 27, 34-38.



The perception that he had of the mission of Israel led him to give injunctions, and to perform with his own hand deeds of vengeance on the surrounding heathen population. As Elijah called fire from heaven upon the messengers of Ahaziah, so Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal. This forcible and terrible act anticipated the zeal of Jehonadab, the son of Rechab, who aided Jehu in his cold-blooded slaughter of the worshippers of Baal, and in another line corresponded with the ruthless revenge taken by the Nazarite Samson on the Philistines. The moral life of Samson was of the meanest kind. His brute strength, his grim humour, his broad buffoonery, his superhuman physical force, rather than moral courage, were consecrated to the extermination of the Philistine and the defence of Israel, and terminated in a gigantic act of revenge and suicide. It revealed something of the spirit which actuated the whole class of those who, by the Nazaritic vow, were pledged to lay "the axe at the root of the trees;" to maintain the purity of worship, and extinguish the hateful idolatry that threatened to corrupt the heart of Israel. This spirit is expressly denounced by our Lord, who, when the sons of Zebedee were ready, like Elijah, to call down fire from heaven to consume the Samaritans, exclaimed, "Ye know not what spirit ye are of: the Son of man is come not to destroy men's lives, but to save them." It is not difficult to see — so long as John the Baptist occupied the same position, and preserved the tokens and the spirit of the Nazaritic vow, separating himself from his brethren, and threatening the powers and authorities of Judaism with condign destruction—why the Lord should have said, "Among



them that are born of women, there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist : nevertheless, he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he." There is another feature of the Nazaritic vow, of which no express mention is made in the case of John, but which acquired prominence in those of Samson and of St. Paul, viz., the religious preservation of the hair. It was in the instance of Samson *peculiarly* emphatic, as he is represented as being aware of the fact that the hair which had never been touched by razor was the symbol and seat of his superhuman strength. When deprived of it by his own folly, he fell a victim to his enemies, and was made "to grind in the prison-house of their sinister ends and practices upon him." It was not till the vow which was laid on him from his birth had been once more redeemed, that he was able to "shake thunder with ruin sternly upon the heads of his evil counsellors, but not without great affliction to himself." St. Paul is twice represented as having shorn his head at the conclusion of a vow corresponding with that of the Nazarite.<sup>1</sup> Baumgarten<sup>2</sup> endeavours to explain these events by reference to the teaching of St. Paul in his Epistle to the Corinthians, where the subjection of woman to man is declared to be evinced by her long hair, and the true primacy of man, by the repressed and shortened condition of this covering of his head. His argument is that the vow of the Nazarite was a vow of dependence, the assumption of a position of entire and absolute dependence upon Jehovah; that Samson was a type of the condition of the Christian apostle who could say, "When I am weak,

<sup>1</sup> Acts xviii. 18 ; xxi. 24-26.

<sup>2</sup> *Acts of the Apostles, or History of the Church in the Apostolic Age.* By W. Baumgarten, Ph.D., translated by Morrison. Vol. ii. 228 ff



then am I strong ;" that the strength Samson received to fight his battles with wild beasts and Philistines was not his own strength, but God's, and the sign, not of his independence, but of his dependence ; and so that when Paul in spirit became a woman, in his submission to the will of others, in the change of his field of operations, and in the weakness of his flesh, he became strong in the Lord, and mighty to pull down strongholds. This is more ingenious than valid. The abundance of hair worn, contrary to the custom of the times, was a type of physical health, strength, beauty, and glory, and the perpetual memorial of the vow of consecration. Thus it helped to keep the life-long consecration of the wearer before the minds of the spectators, as well as fresh in his own. Moreover, the history of the custom in other nations will scarcely sustain the curious speculation of Baumgarten.<sup>1</sup> Cultivation of the hair of the head was not mentioned among the peculiarities of the Rechabites, nor is it referred to among the notable features of John the Baptist ; though, in his presumed likeness to Elijah the Tishbite, his dwelling in the wilderness, and the solemn annunciation made to Zacharias by the angel with reference to his attention to one portion of the Nazarite vow, it is probable that he preserved the rule in all its parts, and that, in virtue of his ceremonial consecration, he felt and knew himself to be "great in the sight of the Lord." At all events, John the Nazarite, in that portion of his duties and abstinences which is expressly mentioned in the Gospel narrative, represents one aspect of Judaism which prescribed and even hallowed the principle of a life-long vow of mortification of all

<sup>1</sup> Oehler, art. "Naziraat," Herzog, *Real Ency.*



carnal passions, the crucifixion of the natural affections. There was one peculiarity of the Nazarite which may have had much to do in driving John into the wilderness. The vow, during the entire period of its incidence, rendered it imperative that the subject of it should not defile himself with the dead.<sup>1</sup> He was not to permit himself to become defiled by any approach to a dead body. If his aged parents breathed their last before him, he could not, without violating the oath, have closed their eyes, or touched their bier, or stood at their grave. This crushing of natural affections was another sign of the presence in the entire institution of the spirit of an exclusive individualism, and a mode of securing holiness and the favour of God, which, though it may be compatible with real sanctity, and may, on this plea, in analogous forms have crept into the Church of Christ, yet it is no part of the Divine ideal, and no essential element in the kingdom of God. It is a matter of surpassing interest that Christ should have come from receiving the testimonies of John to Cana of Galilee; from the baptism by a Nazarite, who would feel it to be a sin against the law of his being and office to touch anything in the form of the fruit of the vine, to perform His first miracle, and to show forth His creative might in providing wine in abundance for a wedding feast.<sup>2</sup> It is instructive that John, who by his antenatal vow would have lost all his official sanctity if he had touched a leper, or a dead man's bier, or the grave-clothes of a friend, should have prepared the way for One whose realization of human sorrow, whose

<sup>1</sup> Numb. vi. 6-11.

<sup>2</sup> Schöttgen, *De Messia*, lib. vii. c. 1, § 2, quotes from *Erubin*, 43. 1. 2. "*Veni et audi: illo tempore quo filius David venit, etiam Nasiræis licitum est vinum bibere.*"



consciousness of human love, and fellowship in human bliss, made him the willing guest at the marriage and the sympathetic mourner at the funeral and the grave. It is not wonderful that when John felt His nature and His mission, and the fulness of His love, he should have cried, "He must increase, but I must decrease;" or that the Lord declared, "Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist; nevertheless, he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he."

## 2. The Essenes.

A question of much deeper interest here emerges. Did John the Baptist belong to the extraordinary community which, under the name of ESSENEs, was scattered throughout Palestine, but had its special home in the oasis of the desert of Engedi, and which sustained subtle relations with the Egyptian solitaries and societies that, under the name of THERAPEUTÆ, excited the interest of Philo-Judæus,<sup>1</sup> and led to the composition of his interesting treatises on the "contemplative life"?

Was John an ESSENE? If we give to this question even a modified affirmative, it becomes all the more important to gauge the influences that produced this singular development, and to measure the extent to which Greek or Oriental tendencies of thought found expression in the career of the Baptist. Wise men came from the East to the cradle of the infant Saviour. Greeks were present at the last Passover, who were anxious to see Jesus. It was compatible with

<sup>1</sup> *Quod omnis probus liber*, and *De Vita Contemplativa*. Phil., *Op. Ed. Mangey*, vol. ii. 445-487. "The latter treatise has," says Ginsburg, "nothing to do with the real Palestinian Essenes;" and Grätz, l.c. 464, urges that it is not the work of Philo-Judæus.



these facts that the forerunner of the Christ should have given embodiment in his own person to the great yearning of both East and West after a higher type of life. Some critics have gone much further than to give a hesitating assent to the idea that John the Baptist belonged to the Essenic Society. They have boldly said that Jesus belonged to the community, adopted its phraseology, recommended its maxims, and was befriended by its leaders.<sup>1</sup> The latter hypothesis played an important part in some of the rationalistic interpretations of the four Gospels which were demolished by Strauss.<sup>2</sup> The admiration expressed by Philo for the Therapeutæ was copied and dwelt on by Eusebius, who started the thoroughly ecclesiastical supposition that these recluses were founders of Christian monachism, who received the approbation of the Lord Jesus to their mode of life,<sup>3</sup> and adopted the practices handed down from the apostles. Now it is extremely probable that they prepared the way for the introduction of monachism into the Christian Church, but it can be shown historically that such a genesis of Essenism is a chronological absurdity. Philo wrote within ten years, or at the most twenty years, after the

<sup>1</sup> Even Dr. Ginsburg, *The Essenes: their History and Doctrines*, 1864, pp. 24, 25, strongly advocates this view. De Quincey, *Works*, vol. vii., hazards, in his paper on "Secret Societies," the speculation that the whole representation of Josephus was a fable. *Christians*, according to him, fled from the storm of persecution into the wilderness, and formed the secret association which the historian so utterly misconceived. The gist of his argument turns on the close resemblances between Essenism and Christianity. Later scholarship has exploded this crude hypothesis.

<sup>2</sup> Strauss' *Life of Jesus*, E. T. iii. p. 326, on "The Angels of the Resurrection;" Kuinoel's suggestion, Matt. xvii., as expanded by Venturini and refuted by Strauss, vol. iii. p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> *H. E.*, lib. ii. c. 17, quotes long passages from Philo, and adds "that Philo, when he wrote these statements, had in view the first heralds of the gospel, and the original practices handed down from the apostles must be obvious to all."



death of Christ, and speaks of their order as scattered throughout Egypt, and as existing among Greeks and Barbarians. Moreover, the origin of Christian monasticism can be traced to a later date.<sup>1</sup> The *primâ facie* resemblances between the Essenism and the Christianity of the first century and the "religious life" of later ages, in both East and West, confer special interest on the supposed relation of the Baptist to this remarkable sect, and have provoked numerous disquisitions on its origin, history, and character.<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Keim, in words which condense his admirable chapter on the Separatists in the Holy Land into a few sentences, observes :—

"The Judaism of the pre-Christian era had its highest, although not irreproachable, development in the order of the Essenes. In this form also is it the most perplexing. They were allied to the Pharisees, yet with very distinctive differences. They were zealous for the law, and yet transgressed it. They were righteous in the spirit of the prophets, and yet more painfully intent than the Pharisees on outward purifications. They were Jews, and yet shut them-

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<sup>1</sup> J. Scaliger. *Elenchus Trihæresii N. Serrarii*. "*Delirium fanaticum et impudentissimum mendacium quo Essenos monachos Christianos fuisse contendit validissimis argumentis elusum.*" Jerome, *Vita Pauli* ; Prideaux, *Connection of Old and New Testaments*, part ii. c. 5 ; De Montalembert's *Moines d'Occident*, tom. i.

<sup>2</sup> The original authorities, Josephus, *Antiq.* xv. 10. 4, 5, xviii. 1. 2-6 ; *Vita*, c. 2 ; *B. J.* ii. c. 8 ; Pliny. *Nat. Hist.* v. 17 ; Philo. l.c. See also Triglandius, *Syntagma Scriptorum de tribus Judæorum Sectis* ; N. Serrarii, Drusii, Scaligeri, *Opuscula* ; Hausrath. *Neutestamentliche Zeitgeschichte*, p. 133, ff. ; Grätz, *Das Essæerthum*, l. c. p. 83, ff. ; Lud. Noack, *Ursprung des Christenthums*, Bd. i. 297 ; Langen, *Das Judenthum in Palastina*, pp. 186-195 ; Neander's *General Church History*, vol. i. ; Clark's *E. T.* pp. 59-67 ; Reuss, *Histoire de la Theologie Chrétienne*, liv. i. c. 9 ; *L'Ebionisme et L'Essenisme*, Dr. Ginsburg ; art. in Kitto's *Ency.* "Essenes," and the work mentioned above ; Westcott, in Smith's *Dict. Bible* ; Jost and Ewald ; Frankel's *Zeitschrift für die religiösen Interessen des Judenthums*, 1846, p. 441. The testimonies of Josephus are referred to at length by Porphyry, *De Abstinencia*, and summarised by Ginsburg ; l.c. p. 54. Dr. Ginsburg gives the substance of De Rossi's (1513-1577) identification of the Essenes and *Baithusians*, which he utterly demolishes. Dr. G. then refers in chronological order to the opinions that have been entertained by a long succession of writers, terminating with Frankel, whose view he endorses.



selves out from the nation ; servants of Jehovah, and yet praying like heathens to the sun. They were a phenomenon of religious despair, they are objects of admiration to Jews, heathens, and Christians, although their admirers are uncertain to this day whether they were Jews, or a school of Jewish heathens, or Christians.”<sup>1</sup>

N. Serrarius,<sup>2</sup> the Jesuit, endeavoured to establish their identity with the Rechabites, and to refer their origin to the Exodus. He supposes that they were secret companions of our Lord, and constituted the bulk of the early Church. It is true that they are not referred to openly in the New Testament, nor does the Talmud expressly mention them by name. It must be chiefly by a comparison of what Josephus says on the subject with what we know of other communities, that we must determine our view on this controverted matter. Josephus had opportunities of acquainting himself with the tenets, practices, and spirit of these “pious men,” which confers special value upon his references to them ;<sup>3</sup> though it is certain that, writing for Gentiles, he gave a colouring to his view of “the three sects” which gravely disturbs historic propriety. He allied Essenes to the Pythagoreans, and represented the Pharisees and Sadducees as resembling the sects of Greek philosophy. They were not sects either in the Greek, Patristic, or modern sense of the word.

<sup>1</sup> Theod. Keim, l. c. Bde. i. 282, Eng. trans. vol. i. 358. See also his *Geschichte Jesu nach den Ergebnissen heutiger Wissenschaft*, pp. 78–84.

<sup>2</sup> The treatise of Serrarius is in Triglandii *Syntagma*, which also contains the vehement and witty reply of Drusius to the speculation.

<sup>3</sup> *Vita*, c. 2. “I made trial of the various sects that were among us. The first, that of the Pharisees, the second, that of the Sadducees, and the third, that of the Essenes. Nor did I content myself with these trials only, but when I was informed that one whose name was Banus lived in the desert, and used no other clothing than grew upon trees, and had no other food than what grew of its own accord, and bathed himself in cold water frequently, both by night and day, in order to preserve his chastity ; I imitated him in those things, and continued with him three years.”—Whiston’s trans.



They were tendencies of thought, and so far as Pharisee and Essene were concerned, they were not mutually exclusive. Josephus refers them to the second century before Christ, and indicates by a few touches their existence at subsequent intervals. Thus he gives the curious interview between Menahem, one of these Essenes, and Herod the Great.<sup>1</sup> He recites the prophecy uttered to Herod when a youth (say B.C. 60), that he should become a king, and the honour always paid to the sect by this prince, and thus illustrates one of the pretensions of the Essenes.

The principal modern writers on the history and the philosophy of the period are satisfied of the thoroughly Jewish position and origin<sup>2</sup> of the Essenes, though Langen and De Pressensé<sup>3</sup> recognize the presence of Gentile speculation. Renan inclines to the belief that between these recluses of the eastern shores of the Dead Sea, and "the sects floating between Judaism, Christianity, Baptism, and Sabeism," there were remote relations "with the *Gourous* and *Mounies* of India;" and "that many of the external practices of John, of the Essenes, and of the Jewish spiritual teachers of this time, were derived from influences then but recently received from the far East."<sup>4</sup> The resemblances of the Essenes to the Pythagoreans on the one hand and to the Buddhists on the other have been often referred to. Zeller<sup>5</sup> has been most emphatic in his maintenance of the former, and Keim thinks that the points of resemblance are too striking to be altogether accidental. Dr.

<sup>1</sup> *Antiq.* xv. 10. 5.    <sup>2</sup> Keim, Grätz, Jost, Ewald, Reuss, Frankel, Ginsburg.

<sup>3</sup> Langen, l. c., strongly contends for the presence of heathen speculation, and of an anti-Levitical spirit. De Pressensé, *Jesus Christ, His Life and Times*. E. T. p. 96.

<sup>4</sup> *Vie de Jésus*, c. 6.

<sup>5</sup> Zeller's *Geschichte der Philosophie*, iii. p. 583, quoted by Ginsburg.



Ginsburg has, I think, shown "the vital distinctions between the brotherhoods," in their ideas of God, their reverence for the authority of their sacred books, their estimate of marriage, of science, and of fate, and in their practical charity and beneficence. In recent times great authorities on Buddhism have called attention to the identity of many of the ideas and practices of the Essenes with those of the followers of *Sakya-Muni Buddha*.<sup>1</sup> (a) Thus the Essenes and Buddhists alike abstained from animal sacrifices,<sup>2</sup> yet the Essenes merely avoided them from the fear of defilement, and were in the habit of sending them to the temple, while the Buddhist abstention was based on the doctrine of metempsychosis. (b) Personal poverty was enjoined upon both, but the few necessities allowed to each differed. The Buddhist monk had his alms-bowl and his razor, and the Essene laboured for his bread; yet if, as *Jost* supposed, he was an expansion of the "Nazarite for life," he could not have required the razor. There is nothing in Buddhism corresponding with the singular Essenic use of the axe or spade.<sup>3</sup> (c) There is much resemblance in their common yearning after virtue, in the method by which they taught that passion might be overcome by mortification, as well as in their common denunciation of the charms of woman and of sexual pleasure. (d) A very remarkable similarity occurs in their common repudiation of unguents,<sup>4</sup> particularly as the Hebrew priesthood was consecrated with holy oil, and the Hindus generally regard unction

<sup>1</sup> Spence Hardy, *Eastern Monachism*, pp. 48, 57, 101, 124, &c.

<sup>2</sup> Jos. *Antiq.* xviii. 1. 5; Childer's *Khuddaka Pâtha*; Burnouf. *Introd. à l'histoire du Bouddhisme Indien*, p. 339.

<sup>3</sup> B. J. ii. 8. 7.

<sup>4</sup> Compare Jos. B. J. ii. 8. 3; Childer's *Khuddaka Pâtha*, p. 3; Köppen, *Die Religion des Buddha*, p. 332, ff.



and perfume as almost a necessary of life. (e) The most impressive comparison may be instituted between the several stages towards saintship or perfection which prevailed in the two communities. Thus the preliminary stage in both was a perception that the world was evil, though the nature of evil is differently conceived in the two systems. The Essene demanded first bodily purity, then continence, then inward purity and the absence of all anger and malice. This corresponds closely with "the second path" of Buddhistic excellence. The same may be said of "the third path," — freedom from evil desires, ignorance, doubt, and heresy—which agrees with the Essenic "increase of faith and holiness." The "fourth path" of the Buddhist to miraculous powers, omniscience, prophecy, and freedom from ALL desire, has a singular though partial resemblance to the Essenic attainment of the power of prophecy and the functions of Elijahship.<sup>1</sup>

It is, however, undoubted that all the prominent features of Essenism were Jewish in their origin, even though oriental ideas had been engrafted on their primitive faith. Their name is full of mystery.<sup>2</sup> Still, moral and ceremonial purity was the aim of these self-denying solitaries. I can believe with Jost<sup>3</sup> that out of a

<sup>1</sup> Burnouf, l. c. § 3. Cf. St. Hilaire, *De Bouddha et sa Religion*, c. 3; Köppen, *Die Religion des Buddha*, pp. 382-441.

<sup>2</sup> See Ginsburg's elaborate dissertation. He gives nineteen etymological explanations. He prefers that from  $\text{רַצִּיָּן}$ , "the pious," one that identifies them with the Chasidim or Assidæans, from whom both they and the Pharisees historically sprung. Serrarius, l. c., has given several further etymologies. Jost, l. c. 207, refers  $\text{נִשְׁבֵּט}$ , "to be silent," as the likeliest origin. Keim thinks a word meaning "to heal," and translated into the Greek word  $\theta\epsilon\rho\alpha\pi\epsilon\upsilon\tau\eta\varsigma$ , is the most probable explanation, and with him Baur, Renan, Herzfeld, agree. Philo, q. o. p. l. § 12, derives the etymology of the word  $\text{Ἐσσαιῶται}$  from  $\text{ὅσαι}$ , which would harmonise at least with the first I have mentioned.

<sup>3</sup> *Geschichte des Judenthums*, p. 209.



strenuous yearning after the ethic grandeur of the Mosaic law, and the perfect ideal of its purity, arose the CHASIDIM, "the saints of God" mentioned in the later psalms, and that from these, Pharisees and Essenes alike sprung. The Sadducees were the antithesis of the Pharisees in their estimate of "the Divine informant," while the Essenes felt that the spiritual ideal of the Pharisees could not be realized in ordinary contact with the world. From cities to towns, from towns to villages, from villages into the dens and caves of the earth, they fled. They sought in the pursuits of agriculture, in abstemious habits, in continence, ablutions, and prayers, to realize, after their own fashion, the Levitical purity. Still some further element was intermingled with it. Corresponding phases of monastic life have characterized Hinduism and Parseism. Essenism was a reaction from the mechanical forms into which Pharisaism was stiffening. The researches of Frankel have demonstrated the harmony in many points between the statements of Josephus concerning the ceremonies of the Essenes and the statements of the *Talmud* and *Midrashim* concerning those of the Pharisees. Dr. Ginsburg enumerates fourteen different items in which their religious characteristics may be said to be identical.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, in the time of Josephus the two "sects" greatly differed in their civil, social, and ecclesiastical relations.

The cardinal point with them was faith in the inspired law of God. By meditation, prayer, self-

<sup>1</sup> Ginsburg, art. in *Bib. Cycl.* on "The Essenes;" his treatise on the Essenes. l. c. Grätz, *Geschichte der Juden*, Band iii. pp. 79-89: "Sie waren eine Steigerung des Pharisäerthums mit dem sie ursprünglich eins waren." He goes on to show that they were "Nazarites for life." The intensity of their aim made them at length avoid communion with all who were not on the same level of purity, and hence necessitated the formation of an order of their own.



mortification, frequent ablutions, and strict attention to the laws of ceremonial purity, they hoped to reach the highest stage of communion with God. These stages, as we have seen, commenced with bodily purity, advanced to celibacy, to spiritual purity, to the cultivation of all gentle affections, and the repudiation of all angry passions. In the next stage they acquired true holiness, then the gift of prophecy, then the power of working miracles, and finally they spoke of attaining the position, the authority, and the glory of Elijah, as forerunner of the Messiah.

It does not appear that they differed materially in doctrine from the Pharisees, although they abstained on ritual grounds from presenting their sacrifices in the temple, "offering sacrifices apart by themselves," and they feared to contract defilement from contact with those who had not given themselves up as they had done to the contemplative or monastic life. Amongst themselves the various stages of perfection that were recognized encouraged the most exclusive spirit. "Every one of a senior class (according to Josephus) thinks all the inferior classes so much beneath him, that if he happen to touch any of them, he washeth after it in the same manner as if he had touched one of another nation." They agreed with the Pharisees in their extraordinary regard for the Sabbath, even pressing their rigour to an hyperbole.<sup>1</sup> Their daily meal was of the simplest kind. It was partaken in their house of religious assembly. After bathing, with prayer and exhortation, they went, with veiled faces,

<sup>1</sup> *B. J.* ii. 8. 9. They did not allow themselves even to ease nature during the twenty-four hours of the Sabbath, because they thought the rule laid down in Deut. xxiii. 12, 13, to be universally obligatory, and incompatible with the Sabbath rest.



in a pure manner to their dining-room, as into a holy temple.<sup>1</sup> They practised frequent and abundant ablutions before food, after every kind of real or fancied defilement, and most especially before reception—after the preliminary probation—by “tremendous oaths,” into their society. They abstained from all other oaths, counting them worse than perjury.<sup>2</sup> They despised riches. They disdained the use of coins, on account of the “images” impressed upon them. They manifested the greatest abhorrence of war and slavery, and braved torture and death with heroic fortitude. With them “pleasure was depravity,” and animal food was discountenanced, not, so far as we can see, on the ground of metempsychosis, but because it promoted sensual desire. Wine was the “drink of fools.” Oil was not used even for unction, and clothes were worn to tatters before they were discarded. They did not absolutely disallow marriage; one section of them even accepted it, for the simple purpose of perpetuating the human race, thus exhibiting a reaction towards the healthy Hebrew conception of matrimony even within this austere community. Still Pliny speaks with enthusiasm of the *gens sine ulla femina*. Hausrath supposes the Baptist to have been quoting one of their dogmas when he cried, “God is able of these stones to raise up children.”<sup>3</sup> This kind of striving after purity and preparation for holiness of life, was also supposed to give them prophetic insight into the future. Traces of the same idea may be found in Daniel x. 3–7, and in the apocryphal literature of the fourth book of

<sup>1</sup> *B. J.* ii. 8. 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 6. Compare the teaching of our Lord, Matt. v. 34; xxiii. 16; Jas. v. 12.

<sup>3</sup> Hausrath, *Neutestamentliche Zeitgeschichte*, p. 139. Die Essæer.



Esdras and Henoch. . . "It is but seldom," said Josephus, "they miss in their predictions,"<sup>1</sup> and some remarkable instances of their soothsaying were recorded by him. "No cry is heard from them for the kingdom of God nor for the Messiah," says Keim, who here disputes the contrary statements of Grätz and Langen, and declares what we believe is true, that: "We scarcely find any Essenic utterances concerning the kingdom and the Messiah. They did not in their sectarian complacency anticipate a national deliverance."

The Pharisees believed in angel and spirit, and in the resurrection of bodies from death,<sup>2</sup> though not in the resurrection of the bodies of all the wicked. Some only will be clothed again with new bodies. Hence it has been assumed by some that the Pharisees held in a modified form the Oriental doctrine of the transmigration of souls from body to body. We see this partially illustrated by the supposition that John the Baptist and Jesus were the resurrection or reappearance of Elijah, or of Jeremiah, or some other of the old prophets.<sup>3</sup> The Essenes did not hold the doctrine of the resurrection of bodies, but they did hold that of the immortality of souls. The essential evil of matter was too deeply engrained into their theory of life for them to have emancipated themselves from the idea of the perpetual and eternal mortality of the body. Josephus expressly compares their doctrine on this subject with the Greek notion of immortality, and Philo represents their religious ideas as essentially one with his own.<sup>4</sup> Their communism, their repudiation in a prophetic spirit of animal sacri-

<sup>1</sup> *Antiq.* xiii. 11. 12; xv. 10. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xxiv. 21; Jos. B. J. xi. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Alger, *Doctrine of a Future Life*, p. 165, ff.

<sup>4</sup> B. J. ii. 8. 11; Philo. q.o.p.l.



fices, their vows of silence, their ceaseless struggle after a higher life, led to the most extraordinary veneration for their community, and drew strangers into closer or more remote relations with them. Their worship of the sun, referred to by Philo and Josephus, may, according to Keim, be accounted for on the Philonic principle that the sun and stars are visible gods; but it impresses me differently. There is much in it that implies the influence of Oriental custom and thought, and this reverence for the sun seems to me to be a sign of Eastern philosophy eclectically combining itself with the strictly Jewish framework of Essenic laws and ideas.

The question arises whether, in the career of John, the son of Zacharias, there is any peculiarity which should identify him with the Essenic ritual and community, and thus explain his relation with, and separateness from, our Lord's mission.

Some of the outward signs of such connection are utterly lacking. The dress of the Baptist may have been mentioned to show that he could not have been a member of the community. The camel's hair raiment and the leathern girdle which are definitely referred to were inconsistent with the *white* robe of the Essenes.<sup>1</sup> It is true that the linen garment must have become soiled from its long use, but it appears to be different in significance from the coarse prophetic garb of the Baptist. His food is described as "locusts and wild honey." This corresponds with Essenic austerity only in spirit and not in the letter. The Essenes seasoned their bread with hyssop, not with honey, and adopted the principle of agriculture and

<sup>1</sup> Drusius, lib. cit. 225; Jos. B. J. ii. 1.



manual labour, by which the wants of the community were supplied from among themselves. They absolutely abstained from all mercantile transactions, all buying and selling, and in this John may have partially resembled them. Their repudiation of marriage, of oaths, of slavery and war, their common worship, their profound veneration for their teachers and for the Mosaic law, their eagerness in maintaining ceremonial purity, and the rigorous exclusiveness of their society, point to an opposite conclusion. At the same time there are certain considerations which make it probable that John stood in such sympathy with them as the "theoretic" Egyptian Essenes may have done, and that he thus brought the entire ascetic institute face to face with Christ and His mission.

(a) The passionate love and assiduous practice of virtue by which they were distinguished, corresponds with all that we know of this preacher of repentance and virtue, who came to the people "in the way of righteousness."

(b) Their abstemious life carried out into elaborate detail the general principles of the Nazarite, the Rechabite, or the Chasidim: and we are told that "John came neither eating nor drinking."

(c) They were characterized by practising a system of ablutions, before and after taking food, and at all the great crises in their uneventful lives. John insisted on baptism with water as necessary to initiation into the true kingdom of God, and as the accompaniment and expression of desire for moral or ceremonial purity.

(d) Their highest stage of spiritual excellence was supposed to be a participation in the character and



functions of Elijah the prophet, not only as a great reformer, but as a precursor of the Messiah.

It would seem then that it was precisely in this ascetic sense that John's whole ministry confronted our Lord, when He made use of the memorable words, "Among them that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist; nevertheless, he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he."

There is, however, a side of Christianity, as it was taught by our Lord and His apostles, in which some resemblance may be traced to Essenic practices. The depreciation of earthly treasure and the honour done to personal poverty were a part of Christ's teaching adapted to the period of the first missionary energies of the Church.<sup>1</sup> The healing powers exercised by the Lord and His apostles were also regarded as a specific function of the Essenes. The abstention from oaths, the sanctity of speech, the great yearning after prophetic gifts, received a full development in the work of the Spirit. But the separation from the world of things and of men, the virtual selfishness of the aim of pure asceticism, and the exacting ceremonialism of the Essenic rule, were condemned by our Lord. The discourse in Matt. xv. 1-26, was as much aimed at the artificial sanctity of the Essenes, as at the tradition of the elders. Christ called for the sacrifice of self, but never for its own sake.

I dare not denounce the career of the ascetic, nor ignore the marvellous influence it has exerted upon human affairs; nevertheless, though much of its ideal became inwrought with popular notions of the divine

<sup>1</sup> Matt. vi. 19-21; xix. 21; Acts ii. 44, 45; iv. 32-34.



life, it was not Christian; and although we find the monastic conception of virtue very soon assimilated by the Christian Church from extraneous sources, and though it is represented as far transcending the biblical and natural ideas of right, and though there may have been states of society when escape from the world and physical separation from its cruelty and defilement were the only feasible conditions of cultivating the Christian virtues, yet the entire theory of such a life differs from the Christian theory. "He who is least in the kingdom of God" is greater than the ascetic John, and that partly in consequence of his failure to perceive that the life of God in the soul is not an *askesis*, but a spirit; not a rule, but a life; not a submission to precept, but a law-making force; not an outward ritual nor a moral code, but a principle; above all, that the chief end of life is not the sanctification of self, but the happiness of man and the glory of God.

Asceticism has played a prodigious part in the world's history. The Roman apologists and modern eulogists of monkery, who try to establish the impossible proposition that Essenes were Christian monks, with the seal of Christ's approval on their regimen, and that the Christian and religious life of the Catholic Church has always welled up from these fountains, should ponder the true historic genealogy of even Western monkery, and observe its melancholy assimilation of the prime error of Oriental dualism and gnosticism, against which the Roman Church has in words so loudly declaimed. From age to age, in various other forms of faith as well as of Christianity, the same fertile lie has been found fermenting; aggravating the moral disturbance and cruel corruption



of the human heart, and sanctifying the revolt against the character and government of God. We see it in the Hindu philosophy, a thousand years before Christ; in the Buddhist monastic system, which still offers to the world a vaster and more complete specimen of the spirit of the revolt than can be found throughout Christendom;<sup>1</sup> in the self-inflicted tortures of the Indian Fakir; in the mystic dreams of the Persian Sufis; in the strange eclecticism of a hardly-defunct Manicheism; in the wild vagaries and monstrous perversions of humanity which disgraced the Nitrian and Syrian deserts; in the abominations and outbreaks of artificially-repressed passion brought to light in the writings of Christian fathers, as the direct offshoots of the system which they extolled so highly; and in the corruptions and follies which nearly extinguished the light of the great Benedictine, Dominican, and Franciscan orders. It is indeed obvious that opportunities were afforded by monachism for religious meditation, self-sacrifice, and toil. It would be impossible to overestimate the debt which human thought and literature owe to the great recluses of the Benedictine rule, or that which civilization owes to the "orders" which devoted themselves to the cultivation of the soil; while Christendom gratefully acknowledges the missionary energy of the Irish and British monasteries, and the sublime consecration to the salvation of outlying barbarians and slaves evinced by the Jesuit propagandists. At the same time the true revival of literature occurred when the work was taken up by men with larger views of humanity, and when the

<sup>1</sup> Renan's *Histoire des langues Semitiques*, iii. 4. 1, Köppen. Burnouf. Schlagenweit. Huc. &c., &c.



cloister no longer monopolized learning. Civilization never made real headway against barbarism, nor solved the secrets of nature's laws, until a truer conception of nature took possession of men's minds. The grandest and most permanent victories of Christendom have been those which have been won by proclaiming, not the sanctity of the hermit, but the life of the Christ; not by preaching the glory of the celibate—that treason against the order of the universe—but by proclaiming the many-sided completeness of the Son of man. We feel that here we may take up the language of St. Paul, and say of all abnormal excrescences, forcing processes, and artificial developments of the Divine life—"Yea, what things were gain to me those I counted loss for Christ; yea, doubtless, I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." "We have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba Father."

### § 3. *John a Prophet of the Lord.*

There is a third office which John was called upon to discharge, with which his entire mission is more closely and significantly associated, and which cannot be said to be specifically the mark of the Old Covenant. "What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet."<sup>1</sup> These are the words of the Lord Himself, confirmed by a variety of other references in the Gospel narrative. We are told elsewhere, "All the people hold John as a prophet."<sup>2</sup> His own refusal of honours, based upon the supposition that he was the

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xi. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. xiv. 5; Luke xx. 6; Matt. xxi. 26.



transmigrated soul of one of the old prophets, is explained by an assumption that puts him on the same elevated platform with the prophets whose words still shook the hearts of the people, as the trees of the wood are shaken by the wind. Without presuming here to travel far into the vast subject of the prophetic office, or the history of its evolution, or the place it has taken in the true kingdom of God, I deem the discussion of some points of surpassing interest indispensable to a right understanding of the testimony and work of the Baptist. I shall endeavour very briefly (1) to illustrate the intellectual method and the mental condition or faculty by which the human race has believed itself to acquire the highest instruction, and to come nearest to the truth, *i. e.*, to the thought of God concerning moral and spiritual things; (2) to trace the part taken by this faculty of the human mind in the foundation of religious systems, and pre-eminently in the establishment of the Hebrew theocracy; (3) to point out the analogy between the work and mission of the Hebrew prophets and that of John the son of Zacharias; and (4) to show that the prophetic function of John is a link in the development of the prophetic office in the Christian Church.

I. Our methods of passing from the known to the unknown are conditioned by the quality and subject-matter of our inquiry. If we are only concerned to know what is contained in our axioms, in our broadest generalizations or our ultimate laws of thought, coupled with fundamental definitions of magnitude and number, we make confident use of the *deductive* and syllogistic processes; and if our application of the method be honest and continuous, we may fairly assume that our



demonstrations have the validity of the premises from which we start. Various attempts have been made to give to *à priori* argumentation, to deductions from first principles of thought in the realm of transcendental theology, the form of mathematical proof. They have all been failures. Experiences, imaginations, huge assumptions have been allowed to slip into the process of the argument, and to vitiate the proof. The inductive logic, on the other hand, is always leading us from specific observations to broad generalizations of facts, to what are called laws of nature, to the properties of matter, to the forces at work in the universe, and to some of the general phenomena even of human life and of the human mind. In providing the material for these speculations, we are constantly coming into contact with the special experiences of individuals, and the records of these experiences, and we can make small way with our induction even of physical phenomena without the exercise of the spirit of trust in our fellow-man: and thus *evidence* of supposed fact, and *faith in testimony*—even though these have to be tested very severely—take their place among the mental processes by which we arrive at the elements of scientific truth. This is still more conspicuous when we step into the region of historic event, and regard the past education of men, institutions, and peoples, as providing the sum total of existing knowledge. But in the processes of induction and experimental inquiry there is a faculty in addition to that of ratiocination in any of its forms, which cannot be dispensed with. The inquirer, the philosopher, will make little progress in his struggle with the perplexing facts which confront him in his process of legitimate hypothesis, if he has



no constructive, imaginative faculty.<sup>1</sup> If the early physicists had not been able to *imagine* so abstract a conception, so high a dream as the orbit of a planet, as the infinitesimal vibration of an invisible æther, as the figure of the earth, or the law of universal attraction, scientific method would have been to the present moment utterly abortive. The grandest advances made in science itself have been accomplished by the imaginations of great thinkers, the glorious guesses and daring intuitions of acute and penetrative minds, to whom it was given to piece together from the scattered and significant fragments of accurately observed fact certain working hypotheses, which might afterwards be verified by experiment. Verification is an imposing word. The verifying faculty is talked about very freely. All that is often meant by it is that no fresh discoveries disprove the accuracy of the hypothesis.

There is, however, a region of truth and of fact that cannot be reached by deduction or induction. There is a world of existence which does not come under these categories of experiment, the facts of which belong to the life of the spirit, to the hopes and fears of men, to the moral nature, and to conceptions which have been produced age after age by the sense of God, by the sense of sin, the yearning after the eternal, the craving after perfection. The reality of this spiritual world, the laws which govern it, the Being who fills it, the overpowering importance of the events enacted within it to millions upon millions of the human race, transcend incalculably the forces, the laws, the destiny of that visible universe with which physical science is conversant. In one respect each man stands alone in

<sup>1</sup> Tyndall on *Scientific Uses of the Imagination*.



this world of spiritual reality. His mode of conceiving and representing it cannot be so readily compared with that of his brother, as can their common experiences of the physical universe. It is more difficult to bring about unanimity, or even resemblance of conception in this region, than in that which is ever forcing itself upon the senses, and on the sense-conditioned powers of reason. The standards of comparison are fewer, the means of verification for strong impression or intuition are less obvious. Deductive processes are helpless machinery in this region of intense life. Inductive method can never be thoroughly applied to it, because no thinker is perfectly sure that his brother's facts correspond with his own. The science of "comparative religion" skims round the outside of this region, but cannot meet the craving of a single soul. It is very learned but very profitless. The history of the development of moral ideas in ancient nations, the theory of the development of religious changes and the commingling of their various elements, may show how human nature has been striving to comfort itself with new sympathies, and to make these do the work of exhausted proofs. But each man has, after all, judging from the scientific platform, to piece together within his own intuitional consciousness, according to his own light, and with such help as may be at hand, the elements of the spiritual universe. It is in this weird and lonely work that he craves, burns, groans for sympathy. It is here that he discards the help of the lower though important mental processes of science, and takes refuge in higher elements and methods. The intuitions of God, of truth, of duty, of sin, of doom, of redemption, which have flashed



across the darkness of one soul, when expressed in words, symbols, sacraments, and worship, kindle beacon lights on the dark waters of human life. What the great poet-artist sees, and can embody in the creations of his art, are not his inner life nor his deepest thought, emotion, or craving; but they have the subtle power of evoking corresponding emotions in other minds. These works of art help to bridge the chasm between the life of his spirit and that of other spirits. They are the subtle hieroglyph of otherwise unutterable aspirations. They create a community of feelings that are supposed to be similar. They are the tokens and keys of common sympathies, which if drawn out into propositions would utterly fail to produce the same effect.

Occasionally, as if by magic, the tatters of some symbolic flag, the words of some simple song, the tones of some widely-known melody, have the power to quicken a common emotion, in a manner that eloquent speech or elaborate disquisition would utterly fail to effect. Whatever has the power to evoke community of sentiment in regions where neither scientific method, nor historic verification, nor deductive process, nor human testimony can reach, takes the place of proof. We hear of old associations probing the heart of an unbeliever; of the words of simple men touching the consciences of their fellows; of the contagion of religious earnestness; of the overwhelming effect of certain ceremonial rites; of the semi-miraculous results which follow the preaching of the old gospel. What does all this show but that there are regions of the human soul where the vivid intuition of spiritual realities takes a higher place than all the other faculties, in securing what at least has the effect of



truth upon the understanding: it has the power of filling the mind, of securing "real assent," and supplying ample direction and stimulus to the will.

II. But what is the part which this faculty of the human mind has taken in the foundation of religious systems? Many of these systems present a complexity of influences and traditions, involve the misapprehension of physical facts, and reveal the morbid activity of the religious sentiment. Every so-called religion is like a river into which numberless tributaries are falling, which is swollen by rains and the upbursting of deep springs of water from below. But while a superficial estimate of the full and final effect of such a river upon the country through which it flows apparently ignores the thousandfold origin of its many waters, yet every drop of the Nile or the Ganges has been in the first instance lifted by the sunbeam to the height, the fall from which gives the momentum of its onward passage to the sea. So all the essential characteristics of every religious system have taken their rise in the troubled guesses, the vivid intuitions, and restless questionings of men touching the spiritual universe in which they find themselves. It is not intellectual proof, nor historical fact, nor deduction from first principles, but the gazing on unseen and eternal realities, and the intense convictions consequent thereupon, which make up the mystery of the Orphic fragments, the songs of the Rig-Veda, the motive force of Buddha's laws, the pith of the words of Mahomet, and which, piece by piece, produced the complicated religious ceremonial of India, Egypt, and Greece. It is the poet rather than the logician, the artist rather than the philosopher, the prophet rather than the legislator,



to whom the world has been indebted for its religious faith. There is, moreover, in the deepest experiences of the Divine life, in the daily growth of the moral and spiritual sense of beauty, truth, and righteousness, that which provides the nearest analogues to the extraordinary condition of mind out of which the religious ideas of great nations and communities have sprung. We are accustomed to pray to God to "cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of His Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love Him." Thus, though there is a vast and legitimate influence exerted on devout minds by the normal action of truth, though the realities of the Divine kingdom impress the heart and arouse the torpid will, yet in so making known the quality of the Divine Name as to induce a perfect moral surrender to the will of God, we look for the inspirations of the Holy Spirit. There is "wisdom and revelation" granted to the believing man. The knowledge of God is quickened, expanded, intensified, by the communication of Divine grace. Just as the whole Church of Christ is called upon to offer up spiritual sacrifices, and every member of it acts the part of a priest, thus showing in daily life what was the significance of the sacerdotal system of the Old Covenant, so also the mighty working of the Holy Spirit in the Church reveals its highest significance in the prophetic office of the old theocracy; and inversely that office is most adequately explained by glancing on to the time when the sublime wish of the great prophetic lawgiver, that all the Lord's people should be prophets, and that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them, was fulfilled—when Joel's grand vision was realized, and Jehovah poured out His Spirit upon all flesh.



III. The prophetic order and office among the ancient Hebrews did for them a notable service, which in the estimation of those who are far from being admiring disciples of Hebraism, or believers in Biblical theology, made the Jews the most progressive people of antiquity, and constituted their literature the most fertile, suggestive, and practically useful in the entire realm of thought. The prophets criticised existing institutions. They rose above the prescriptions of centuries, they brought the daily conduct of religious institutions and national life to the touchstone of something higher and deeper than existing laws, or the hitherto recognized revelation of the Divine will. It was the law of their existence, that without creating a revolution, without originating schismatic action, they should yet continually add to the religion of their forefathers new and more spiritual elements. There was a continuous succession of men in Israel, who were regarded as an essential feature and element of their national life, but who, without any indispensable training, without ceremonial guarantee, without chrism, ordination, or hereditary rank, came to their brethren with that which they truly called "the word of Jehovah," and were listened to by prince and priest, by noble and peasant. They came from all classes in society. Men of royal blood and lofty mental endowments, men of humble birth and obscure occupation, little children, distinguished priests and common herdsmen, poets of broad culture, narrow men haunted with one irresistible thought touching the sin or doom of guilty prince, priest, or city, came forth from their retirement in dens or caves of the earth, or from the courts of the temple, or from their ivory throne in some palace of Lebanon, and



revealed "the arm of the Lord." The one common principle in every case was that they had received a Divine call, and to use the expressive phrase of one of them, "the Lord had uncovered their ear" and spoken to them, as with still small voice, the warning or consolation or command which they were thenceforward bound to utter. It was thus they conferred upon the Jewish people their spiritually progressive character. When the prophets ceased to speak, when in its polity, institutions, theology, and ceremonial, Israel turned back upon itself and on its own written and traditional law, the forces of the nation collapsed, and its living mission to the world was at an end. The kingdom of God was given to another nation, which would bring forth the fruit thereof.

The question arises, Was this faculty of spiritual intuition touching the Divine will and human duty a mere hallucination? On the contrary, the inspiration of these prophets was, it seems to us, one among the most veritable facts in the history of the world. They were not philosophers coming to logical conclusions from admitted premises, nor were they students in the dawn of human thought drawing inductive conclusions and determining general laws of the spiritual world. They spake that which they saw, heard, and felt in the transcendental region of the human soul, where it stands face to face with the living God. They could neither define nor prove the process by which they knew that the Lord spake by them, and that He who is the eternal truth of things had put His word upon their tongues. Brought into inexplicable relation with the purposes of Providence, they read the coming disasters of Egypt, Philistia, Babylon, as well as the impending



doom hovering over Korah, Saul, Ahab, and Belshazzar. Standing in the presence of God, they cried unto the Lord day and night for the people, and were often "heard in that they feared." Moses, Samuel, David, Elijah, thus became the voices of mercy and of doom unto the people, and their entire mission furnishes, as a matter of fact, the highest class of proof which the human intellect now possesses that the deepest reality of existence presents itself in the region that underlies sense and logical formulæ, and embraces the activity, thought, and nature of the Eternal One.<sup>1</sup>

It was to this famous order of men that, by consent of both friend and foe, John and Jesus alike belonged. The Nazaritic vow and the ascetic order, to which John was pledged, had been steps in advance of the merely ceremonial caste in which he was by birth included, and we have undoubted proof that in the estimation of his contemporaries he ranked with the order of Hebrew prophets. Various words are used by the sacred writers to denote this order, but the famous term *Nabi*<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "So ist die Weissagung eine durch der Göttlichen Geist gewirkte unmittelbare Gewissheit über den Göttlichen Willen und Rathschluss, wie dieselben in den ewig-gültigen Gesetzen Göttlichen Wesens ruhen."—H. Schultz. *Alt-testamentliche Theologie*, p. 173.

<sup>2</sup> נָבִי, *Nabi*, from נָבַח, "to spring, or stream forth," "to speak in a flow of words," together with the allied root נָבַח, which also means primarily "to bubble up," and hence "to speak;" in its earliest reference probably denoted one who spoke in spontaneous, musical recitative. The Syriac "bana," Greek φα-ναι, Latin "fa-ri," may be allied with it. It has a very wide sense as a "speaker" in Gen. xx. 7; in Exod. iv. 15, 16, a more restricted sense. The LXX. translate the word by προφήτης, "one who speaks for another." In niph'al form it signifies the legitimate functions; in hithp'al form, one who simulates such functions (Ezek. xxviii. 4, 9, 10; Amos iii. 8; Jer. xx. 1; xxix. 26). The other words (*Roëh* and *Chozeh*) determine the ground of the *Nabi's* functions. The *Roëh* is he who (רָאָה) sees the visions of Jehovah, and thus obtains the material on which he speaks or sings. The *Chozeh* (חָזַק) is one who (חָזַק) cuts with his eye through hypocrisy and excuses, and reproves or rebukes accordingly. See 1 Chron. xxix. 29, for all three words.



finds its interpretation in the passage<sup>1</sup> where Aaron is said to stand in this relation to Moses, Moses being to him instead of God. The implication was that the true *Nabi* does not speak his own thoughts, though they may be expressed in his own words, but that he is the mouthpiece, the interpreter of God to man. This is unquestionably the true significance of the word "prophet."<sup>2</sup> The words used by a prophet, even when he has to interpret to men the thoughts of the Most High, to make known the truth of Jehovah, must, by the nature of the case, be functions of the hearer's as well as of the speaker's mind. The words must be those which in the usage familiar to the hearer would most nearly convey the thought that seeks expression. Moses did not give to the eloquent Aaron the words, but the ideas, which he was to interpret in the form in which Pharaoh and the children of Israel would best understand them. The revelations and intuitions at the burning bush were the means by which Moses realized the universal presence of Jehovah. He became the supreme ruler of the people to whom God sent him, and his

Gad, Iddo, Jeduthun, Asaph, are all called *Roëh*. Samuel is thus spoken of, and the word is expressly said to be more ancient than *Nabi*, 1 Sam. ix. 9, 19. The traces of *Nabi* in the Pentateuch have hence been held to be of later date. Dr. Payne Smith has made the suggestion that  $\square\text{ע}\text{ד}$  was read by the LXX. for  $\square\text{י}\text{ד}$ , that the rendering reflects the true reading of 1 Sam. ix. 9, and shows the statement to be that the *people* formerly called *Nabi* a *Roëh*, implying that it was a popular, not an authorized designation; but the passage is manifestly a late gloss. The term "seer" did not disappear with the prominence given from the time of Samuel to the idea of prophet. See, on the other hand, Hengstenberg, *Authenticity of the Pentateuch*, vol. ii. 274. The classical passage for the biblical meaning is Exod. iv. 1-17. Ewald's *History of Israel*, E.T. by Martineau, ii. 47-53. See also Kuenen's *History of the Religion of Israel*, E.T. vol. i. pp. 213-217, who mentions the unsatisfactory conjecture of *Land*, that the word is derived from a niph'al form of  $\text{לָבַד}$ , "to go," and means the person into whom some one enters. <sup>1</sup> Exod. iv. 10-17.

<sup>2</sup> Apollo is described as the *προφήτης* of Zeus. Æschylus, *Eum.* 19. *προφῆται* were attached to the temples to interpret the *μάντις*.



office as legislator and priest was founded on his Divine legation. The assurance of his commission was confirmed to him by supernatural signs, while the fluctuating confidence of the people in his right to guide and control their actions, was established by their observing how the most fearful judgments on Egypt appeared to follow the exertion of his human will. He became "more than a prophet," more than was commonly understood even by that potent word.<sup>1</sup> He was "Jehovah's slave." "My servant Moses" is the term by which Jehovah designated him, and he was endowed with the special privileges which, in Oriental countries and in the Hebrew polity,<sup>2</sup> the servant and steward of the house enjoyed. With Moses, "Jehovah spake face to face, as a man speaketh with his friend." It was "a prophet like unto Moses" whom the Lord would cause to arise among them, to whom they should hearken. Thus the people were from the first put in a state of expectancy and hope, for higher, more direct, and personal communications with the living God.

"The PROPHET was 'the messenger or interpreter of the Divine will.' Such is the force of all the synonyms employed for the office. The prophet is expressly called 'the interpreter' (Isa. xliii. 27); 'messenger of Jehovah' (Hag. i. 13); 'the man of spirit' (Hos. ix. 7). 'The spirit of Jehovah,' enters into him. These expressions correspond exactly to our words 'inspired' and 'inspiration.'"<sup>3</sup>

The contrast between the position of the prophets and that of the priests is remarkable. The prophets were not organically opposed to the priesthood, but they

<sup>1</sup> Numb. xii. 6; Deut. xviii. 15.

<sup>2</sup> This throws light on the argument in Heb. iii., and in the lofty designation of the servant of Jehovah given to Messiah in Isa. xl.-lxvi. See Payne Smith, *Prophecy*, p. 79. ff.

<sup>3</sup> Dean Stanley's *Lectures on the Jewish Church*. First Series, p. 419.



were continually penetrating the hidden secrets of men's hearts, and revealing the lack of harmony between the sacramental acts of priests and people and their actual life. The denunciations of the prophets proclaim, not the inherent valuelessness of the sacrificial rites, but the utter corruption of those who were making the ceremonial a substitute for moral life. Their duties were not like those of the priests; confined to special places, times, and seasons, but any day or place might see a prophet of the Lord confronting the unbeliever, the idolater, or the worldling. A king of Israel could not undertake unlawful or idolatrous rites without some man of God prophesying against his altar and his golden calves.<sup>1</sup> Ahab in the vineyard of Jezreel,<sup>2</sup> Ahaz<sup>3</sup> by the upper conduit of the fuller's field, Hezekiah<sup>4</sup> when revealing his treasures to the Assyrian ambassadors, Jehoiakim<sup>5</sup> in his palace, saw the dreaded features of these enemies of all unrighteousness. Sacrificial rites, sacred lustrations, pompous ceremonial, were the great agencies of the priests. Holy life and mighty words, appealing directly to the conscience, were the instruments wielded by the prophets. No mere power of mind, heart, or conscience, would justify a son of Reuben or of Ephraim in undertaking the duties of a priest. The priest belonged to a caste or hereditary guild, into which none but a son of Aaron, with certain specified exceptions, could be admitted. On the other hand, no caste, no birthright, no training, could constitute a man a prophet of the Lord if he had not received "the word of the Lord," and the inward call to see and to speak. The two offices

<sup>1</sup> Kings xii. 28.<sup>2</sup> Ibid. xxi. 17-24.

Isa. vii. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Kings xix. 20 ; Isa. xxxvii.<sup>5</sup> Jer. xxii., &c.



were alike recapitulated in the person of Him who is at once our Prophet and our Priest. It was full of deep significance, that before He appeared the last of the old prophets should come ; that the critical, searching, and prophetic ministry of John should gather up the lessons of the past, and show the full extent to which the spirituality and moral purity of the Old Covenant could reach.

There were some special characteristics of the Hebrew prophets embodied in the ministry and mission of John. Thus (1), they were characterized by great personal independence. Invested with no prescribed dignity, no hereditary, educational, or social claims to respect, they yet delivered their message or burden as the voice of the living God.<sup>1</sup> Jonah, Nathan, Michaiah, Elijah, were only individual specimens of a goodly fellowship of prophets, who, in virtue of an irresistible persuasion that they knew the mind of the Lord, appeared on the historic scene, and spake in the ears of priests, kings, and people, the word of righteousness. This independence of other authority is the more remarkable from the *pari-passu* development among the Hebrews of an hereditary dynasty and a sacerdotal order.<sup>2</sup> Doubtless when a prophet was also a judge like Samuel, or a king like David, or a priest like Jeremiah or Ezekiel, his words came with greater force upon the ears of the people, and the prophetic mission acquired a still higher claim to respect. Yet

<sup>1</sup> H. Schultz on *Wirksamkeit und Stellung der Propheten*. l.c. p. 167.

<sup>2</sup> This feature cannot be pressed with those who, like Kuenen, Kalisch, Colenso, and others, endeavour to establish the late origin of the Levitical legislation. The far-spread effect of John's prophetic voice at a time when the Levitical *service* and *hierarchy* were believed to be venerable and Mosaic, is noteworthy even on this hypothesis.



Nathan denounced the sins of David to his face; Michaiah and Elijah threatened the apostate Ahab; Isaiah swayed all hearts by his mighty words; and so terrible was the impression produced by the appearance of Jonah on the king of Assyria, that he proclaimed a fast, and he and all his people cried mightily to the Lord for mercy. In exact correspondence with this high personal independence, "the word of the Lord came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness," and, like his elder brethren, he began to utter words which compelled the inhabitants of Judæa to hearken, and which made Herod the tetrarch tremble on his throne. John was seized by the irresistible impulse. He knew that God had sent him; and when he came forth from his desert hiding-place, as Elijah had done before him, his words swept like a mountain blast over the institutions and social practices of his countrymen. Whenever in these days we wish to express the force with which clear-sighted conscience speaks to the torpid heart, the crooked policy, or social degradation of a people; when the might of one strong-souled man moves a nation, and we want some analogy to portray the peculiar quality of personal earnestness and fearless independence, we instinctively compare such a man to a Hebrew prophet, and the last and greatest of them all rises up to view.

(2) The Hebrew prophets were, moreover, an ORDER of men, though the links which related them to one another were in the hidden region of the spirit. Their intuitions, their Divine inspirations, brought them into individual but common relation with the same great realities of truth and righteousness. They were aware of one another's words, they meditated the uttered



thoughts of the Lord. By every word that proceeded out of the mouth of God they lived. Thus David's psalms reveal the ground-tone and key-notes of Nathan's prophecies.<sup>1</sup> Thus the words of Moses, "the man of God," formed the basis of many a denunciation of Jeremiah.<sup>2</sup> Isaiah and Micah were in close affinity with each other.<sup>3</sup> The visions of Ezekiel were sustained by the threats of Jeremiah.<sup>4</sup> Hints given by one prophet were developed by others, the nebulous visions of one age became clusters of stars in the next, and the progress of the prophetic knowledge of God and His ways was "from more to more."<sup>5</sup> Every vision was added to the sum of things known, until the whole people became prophetic, and the spiritual world interpenetrated the material world with an unearthly glow. This peculiarity, which we trace in the mission of all the great prophets, was not absent from the earliest words of the Baptist. He was familiar with the prediction of "the voice in the wilderness," he knew that

<sup>1</sup> Compare 2 Sam. vii. 3-16 with the Psalms which celebrate the perpetuity of David's house and all the triumphs of God's "Holy One.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Deut. xv.-xvi. 22 with Jer. xxxiv; Deut. iv. 40 with Jer. vii. 7; Deut. vii. 12 with Jer. xi. 5. This resemblance is so striking in some respects that modern German criticism has credited Jeremiah with the authorship of Deuteronomy. This view is illustrated in great detail by Dr. Colenso, *The Pentateuch and Book of Joshua Critically Examined*. Part iii. chaps. iv.-xviii. Ewald, *History of Israel*, E.T., vol. i. 127, says: "The book was much *imitated* as early as the age of Jeremiah;" although, with Riehm, Kuenen, and Bleek, he attributes the book to the reign of Manasseh.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Isa. ii. with Micah iv.; Isa. liv. 1-6, lxvi. 6-9 with Micah iv. 10.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Ezek. xiii. with Jer. xxiii. See Fairbairn's *Ezekiel, an Exposition*, p. 93, ff.

<sup>5</sup> This idea is illustrated in interesting detail by Dean Payne Smith, *Prophecy a Preparation for Christ*, Lectures vi., vii. "The later prophets do not so much develope as fill up the outlines of the gospel which the early prophets sketched in full, large, and grand proportions. The prophets formed a large and organised community, thoroughly conversant with one another's writings, trained up in the study of them, anxiously searching out the meaning of them. . . . Many a later prophecy was the result of patient study of what had been already revealed." pp. 275, 278.



the messenger of the Lord of hosts would go before him to prepare His ways. The prophecy of Malachi, the judgments and burden uttered by the last prophet, are reproduced in his burning words. His own inspiration links his career with that of the coming Christ, and his explanation of himself is, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness." The Lord Himself abundantly sustained the same character. Each Evangelist, when portraying with prophetic insight some feature of the perfect life of the God-Man, felt the hitherto inaudible tones of the earlier Scriptures giving forth their resonant notes in sublime unison so soon as the great Prophet spoke. All mighty men of "vision and faculty divine," from the prisoner at Rome to the exile of Patmos, confirm their mutual inspirations touching things unseen by this fellowship of their deep intuitions concerning the will, the nature, and the purpose of God. The authority of inspirations will not lead into schism and discord those whose spiritual nature throbs in harmony with their dominant tone. Nothing in the history of thought is more wonderful than the oneness and continuity of Holy Scripture, than that unison in the intuitions of men severed from each other by thousands of years, by varied fortunes, by diversity of cultivation, and even by external dispensations of grace. At the present moment, wherever the Divine life spreads, and society as well as the individual becomes transfigured by it, it reveals more and more its one origin. Science and literature, Scripture and the Church, the history of men and nations, are combining to produce out of nobler material than antique ritual, than decrees of councils, or than the dicta of theologians, the unity of the Catholic faith.



(3) One of the special characteristics of the Hebrew prophets consisted of the psychological methods by which they were furnished with these revelations. Vision, dream, trance, ecstasis, were common incidents in their history. They fell into a trance, having their eyes open.<sup>1</sup> They looked and saw the hosts of Israel scattered like sheep upon the mountains.<sup>2</sup> They saw the Lord sitting upon His throne, high and lifted up, and His train filling the temple.<sup>3</sup> They dreamed of a ladder set up on the earth, the top of which reached to heaven and God.<sup>4</sup> They saw descending from heaven a great sheet, knit at the four corners, containing all the beasts of the earth.<sup>5</sup> The visions of Moses and Elijah, and those of Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah, need not be enumerated. One common feature seems to have characterized them—the prophet's ordinary sense-consciousness was suspended, and the customary flow of his thoughts was often arrested, by an abnormal state of mind which corresponded with a dream, but was distinct from it. Still, his vision was no delirium of excitement, no frantic phantasm which overmastered his intelligence and paralyzed his will. Even when the afflatus was widely diffused, and the state of ecstasis characterized whole groups of men and women, Paul reminded them that "the spirits of the prophets were subject to the prophets." The seer was master of his own *ego*, of his spiritual consciousness; he was still himself, though "whether in the body or out of the body he could not tell;" and he was able to give to his brother men the result, so far as words could give it. He stood out of

<sup>1</sup> Numb. xxiv. 4.<sup>2</sup> 1 Kings xxii. 17-19.<sup>3</sup> Isa. vi. 1.<sup>4</sup> Gen. xxviii. 12.<sup>5</sup> Acts x. and xi.



self in respect of the ordinary testimony of the senses, but was more conscious of what self is, than at any other time. It is sometimes said that our Lord was never thrown into this ecstatic state. This is only partially true. The transfiguration (if not the baptism and the temptation) corresponds with some of the visions of the older prophets, and with the ecstasies of Peter, John, and Paul. Be this as it may, He who said of Himself, "No man hath ascended into heaven saving he who came down from heaven, even the Son of man WHO IS IN HEAVEN," must in one sense have been, all His life long, enjoying a continual vision of the realities of the Divine nature and the world of spirit. It was His normal state, and because of the harmony of His being in all its parts, and His control of self, it left no trace of excitement upon His words. But was John deprived of this strong supernatural stimulus of his spiritual nature? I think not. Surely the special revelation given to him of the opening heavens and of the descending dove, and his intuitive perception of the character of Him who would baptize with the Holy Ghost, place his experience in the same class of mysterious consciousnesses. He saw a reality, but one which the crowd of his disciples saw not. He too "beheld the visions of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open." He was alive to what was around him, but still more alive to stupendous mysteries ordinarily veiled even from such eyes as his. Doubtless one who knew what it was to enjoy an intensely intellectual life, apart from the wealth of knowledge furnished by the senses, and who thus lived in the reminiscence of this spiritual world and in communion with the Eternal,—even when no unusual



exaltation of spirit was being afforded to him,—enjoyed a “glorious liberty,” and could take a view of human life and its complicated affairs, the crystalline clearness of which made his words of exceeding value. John saw the approaching kingdom of God, and knew by the force of his special revelations what baptism with the Holy Ghost might be. He spoke with such fearlessness and force that all men counted him to be a prophet indeed. It was this which led Pharisees and Sadducees, publicans and harlots, soldiers and kings, fishermen and slaves, to come and ask him, “What shall we do?” The old prophets were sought after by the Jewish people both in their trivial duties and in great crises—when a borrowed axe fell into the river, as well as when an only child lay dead. If a king wished to build a temple or to fight a battle, he “inquired of the Lord.” Prophets advised upon all matters, from the smallest domestic loss to the issues of foreign invasion. Their writings show that they were the true statesmen and the true patriots, whose judgments rose above the interests of party, and that they were not swayed by the traditions of their order. They were the poets, the critics, the annalists, and the historians of their nation. They were the recognized expounders of Holy Scripture, and, strange to say, their words acquired a reputation which was almost, if not quite, equal to that of their own earlier sacred books. Not a few of the Hebrew prophets felt their hold upon the people augmented by the miraculous powers which they wielded, the signs and wonders which they wrought; but this was not a universal endowment. If this was withheld, there was that in the general likeness of their tone, their manner of address, their fierce



hatred of insincerity, uncleanness, and disloyalty to Jehovah, that, though they did no miracle, it was nevertheless admitted that all things which they spake were true. John must be classed with these. His claims to attention did not rest upon his acts of supernatural healing or vengeance. He did not call fire from heaven, nor divide the waters, nor raise the dead. His right to speak turned upon the intense reality of his message, the power he possessed to diffuse his own convictions, to kindle in other hearts something of the fire of his own enthusiasm.

(4) There is one grand peculiarity of the prophetic order, a full discussion of which is here impossible, but which bears strongly on the position of John. I refer to the definite *prediction* of future events. Doubtless this meaning has long been attributed to the word prophet, and is supposed by many to be its chief significance. We cannot admit that it has acquired this meaning in recent times by the aid of an etymological mistake. At no period before or since the seventeenth century<sup>1</sup> had the functions of the Hebrew or Christian prophet been reduced to the mere ability to predict the future. The "higher" biblical criticism, it is true, refuses this exposition of facts, and determines the chronological place of a document or of a single phrase in a prophetic work by the known date of the event to which predictive reference is made. This canon of criticism proceeds on the supposition that a prediction is so improbable as to be incredible, or is meta-

<sup>1</sup> Dean Stanley, in his interesting chapter on "The Prophetic Order," in his *Lectures on the Jewish Church*, First Series, p. 417, says: "In the seventeenth century the limitation of the word to prediction had gradually begun to appear. . . . Biblical criticism has now resuscitated the biblical use of the word."



physically unthinkable. One of the earliest descriptions of the prophet's gifts and calling turns expressly on his admitted acquaintance with the secrets of the will of God. "And if thou shalt say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken?" The answer is: "When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously."<sup>1</sup> The concurrence of a prophet's speech or prediction with the event, is not however an infallible sign that he is a prophet of the Lord. If the moral tone and religious loyalty of the man are at fault, the prediction will go for nothing.<sup>2</sup> The great prophecies of the dying Israel and of the dying Moses, to say nothing of the marvellous outlook of the seer Balaam, are distinct foreshadowings of the future career of the sacred people. The illustrations are too numerous to be mentioned in which the Hebrew prophets assumed to foresee the future destiny of peoples and of individuals. There was, it is true, a conditional prophesying, the principle of which throws much light on the character of the whole group of oracular utterances. "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; if it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good wherewith I said I would

Deut. xviii. 21, 22.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. xiii. 1-5.



benefit them.”<sup>1</sup> On this principle is to be explained the definite predictive prophecy of Jonah to the people of Nineveh: “Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown.” This appears to have been conditional, and the whole record of it, with its consequences, occurs in Holy Writ for the very purpose of exhibiting the gracious intention of such predictions. It would be hard, however, to reduce all the predictive prophecies of the Hebrew prophets to this class. They are too definite and detailed in their form, too specific and too decretive in their essence, to suffer this interpretation. They are outlines of the future development of a people, which, if delivered before such development, indicate an abnormal elevation of vision, and such supernatural and Divine teaching as is entirely beyond the scope of science, the shrewd guess of the statesman, or the ambiguous vaticination of the heathen oracles. Neither the scientific prevision of future phenomena, nor the mathematic theory of probability, throws a ray of light upon the admission of these men into the deep mystery of the Divine purpose. The supernatural element in every miracle<sup>2</sup> consists in man’s acquaintance with the purpose of God. Moses did not bring the plagues on Egypt, nor did Elijah create the fire which consumed the sacrifice; but they knew by sure vision what was about to take place. There have doubtless been heathen oracles, and even inexplicable previsions of the future history of Rome and other nations, which have also been fulfilled in their seasons. If the world is working out a Divine plan, if moral order corresponds to the purpose of a living God, then that which is most contingent, and, so far

<sup>1</sup> Jer. xviii. 7-10.<sup>2</sup> Dean Mansel, art. on “Miracles,” *Kitto’s Cycl.*



as consciousness goes, most entirely dependent on human will, is nevertheless a part of that ultimate plan. Glimpses of the design of God are seen along many planes of vision. Those who have long pondered God's ways and man's ways, have been strengthened to see and know the character of men, the destiny of nations, the future of the world.

There is one class of such anticipations which has, more or less, been diffused throughout mankind, and which has received very special exposition in Hebrew prophecy. I refer especially to what is often described as the prediction of the person, the coming, and the work of the Messiah.

The effect of these predictions was to create a feverish hope for a great Deliverer, for a Priest after the order of Melchizedek, a Prophet like unto Moses, a King like David, who should reign for ever. The whole nation became in this sense saturated with visionary expectations of a golden age in the distant future. At times the people thought that all their hope was on the point of fruition, and the prophets spoke with such clearness of the immediate appearance of the prospective kingdom and glory, that the people ran the risk of grievous disappointment. One of the leading functions of the prophets was to guide, correct, and augment this hope, which from the dawn of their history had exercised so much influence on their religious life. Avoiding all dubious oracles, leaving many questions open to settlement by enlightened criticism, we cannot doubt that "the seed of Abraham" was destined by prophecy to bless all the kindreds of the earth. The line of the blessing was to run especially in the family of Isaac and the children of Israel. The



tribe of Judah was to have the royal pre-eminence, though Levi would be entrusted with the priesthood, and though the family of Joseph would bear the "crown of him who was separated from his brethren." A prophet of transcendent force would at length arise, whose words should be law for them. Though long delayed, the throne of David was set up, and that royal poet taught the people to sing of the eternal reign of his dynasty. He proclaimed the triumph of God's holy One over disaster, cruelty, and death itself, and he often imaged the ideal sufferer whom he represented as gaining the victory, and ruling for ever and ever. The minstrelsy of David and of later poets created a joyous trust in God's righteousness, in His power to deliver from sin and its curse, and in the ultimate triumph of peace, purity, and right. In gorgeous visions all the nations were represented as forming the nuptial train of the great King of Righteousness, who received in holy song the name and glory of God Himself. The later prophecies of Isaiah unfolded, with abundance of detail, the functions of this King of men. He is described as "the servant of Jehovah," who would secure the promises made to the holy people, and even out of deep disaster and vicarious suffering become their true Lord. He would make "his grave with the wicked," and yet Jehovah would prolong His days and give Him long and full reward for the travail of His soul. The sword would awake against the man that was "the fellow of the Lord of hosts." The "latter days" were to be conspicuous for the triumph of the purest worship, the realization of the fatherly love of God, the judgment upon all unrighteousness. They would see the fall of idolatry, and victory over death and the



grave. Bright visions floated before the people of universal monarchy, administered from the heavens by angelic messengers ; of a temple of transcendent glory ; of a union of the anciently-divided house under a new David, who should be as an angel of God before them ; of a morning without clouds, of a sun of righteousness, of a Divine manifestation in humanity, of an incarnate wisdom, of the kingdom of God which should be everlasting, of a dominion which should outlive all other thrones and powers, and endure for ever and ever.

We have now simply to ask : Did John belong to the "goodly fellowship of the prophets" ? Was he more than an ascetic Rabbi, who urged repentance, and proclaimed the reality and value of the older revelation ? Is the brief record of his utterances charged with Messianic hopes ? I think these questions must be answered in the affirmative. He came into the secret of God. He knew that the hour had struck, and THE MAN had come. He proclaimed the Jewish Messiah with all the features which the older prophets had portrayed as His. He felt throbbing within him the pulses of a tremendous future. He saw it with his eyes. The approach of the kingdom and the King was the burden of his teaching. He saw with trembling and awe "the wrath to come." He who had baptized with water conceived the near possibility of being bathed in fire and filled with the Holy Ghost. He added thus the force of *prediction* to all the other features of his Hebrew mission, and produced an impression which after his death gave rise to the saying of the people, "John did no miracle, but all things that he spake of this man were true." The penetration of his vision, the force of his



conscience, the vehemence of his appeal, his complete independence of constituted authority, coupled with profound reverence for the prophetic word and the accuracy of his foresight, convinced his contemporaries that here was a man who ranged with one of the old prophets. In a deep and true sense he was the last of them.

It is true that Paul, Peter, and John received Divine illumination, "abundance of revelations," visions of the Lamb, of the truth of God, and of the unseen world. Stephen in his dying trance beheld the triumphant Christ, and was filled with the Holy Ghost. Saul of Tarsus was a "prophet" before he became an apostle. Flashes of prophetic fire quickened into vigorous life the Churches of Asia Minor; and ever since there have been outbreaks of prophetic fervour, which, although they have sometimes been associated with excitement, superstition, and folly, have also brought times of refreshing and revival to the Church. When St. Benedict of Nursia, or St. Francis of Assisi, when the "Friends of the Light," the reformers of the sixteenth century, the English Puritans, Quakers, and Methodists, commenced their successive revivals of religious earnestness, there was a return of this abnormal intensity of feeling, a renewal of dying faith, a burst of moral energy, a display of self-sacrificing zeal, a realization of unseen things, a prophecy of the coming wrath and judgment, that may be compared with the prophetic flame which burned in the heart of the Baptist. But these manifestations belong rather to the "dispensation" of the Baptist than to the power of the Christ.

The whole "law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus" is the direct and blessed communion of the soul of



every believer with the living God. The Christian life in its deepest significance, and throughout the whole Church, is, or ought to be, a truly prophetic life, for the following reasons.

(1) The Divine life is characterized by the vision of unseen and eternal things, which are not offered to the mere senses, which are not revealed by the mental faculties and intellectual methods that depend on the senses for their materials. The pure in heart see God. Those born from above discern what is concealed from the eye of the unregenerate. They who are born of the Spirit see the kingdom of God. They know that which passes knowledge, the length, the breadth, the depth, and the height of the love of God in Christ. When taken to that high point of observation—the Cross of Christ — there widens before their gaze a new and previously unperceived horizon, within which the quality of human life, the tendencies of human sin, and the perfections of the blessed God, are seen in a light unknown before. Henceforth the whole world is suffused by this light, and receives from it a new meaning. The Divine providence over men, communities, and nations, now finds its true significance. Though eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God hath prepared for them that love him, God has revealed these mysteries unto believers by His Spirit. They have the mind of Christ. The eye of their understanding is enlightened, that they may know the hope of the Divine calling, and the riches of the glory of the inheritance. The full assurance of faith, the unction of the Holy One, by which the saints of God know all things, and



judge all things, and are led into all truth ; the faith which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things unseen ; the Christ formed within men, the transcendent experiences of the child of God, the communion with the living God, and the joy and inward intercessions of the Holy Ghost, place the possessor of these mysteries of the kingdom of heaven on the same plane with those who stood out of self in holy inspirations, and who then most entirely learned what self was.

(2) As the prophets formed a holy ORDER of men, which was created by the Spirit of God, and continuously stimulated by the words which they had spoken, so the words of the holy prophets, which have been since the world began, constitute the universal bonds of Christian fellowship. By the word of truth God begets His children. The life thus quickened is the life of kindred intuition and common emotion. The word of the Lord that came by Isaiah, or John, or Paul, above all, the word of Christ Himself, excites in others the same vision, the same confidence, the same hope. It "dwells in us richly in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." "By every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God doth man live." It is in the fervour and depth of these common experiences that we all are "to come to the unity of the faith and knowledge of the Son of God." That which apostles saw and heard, they declared, that we might have fellowship with those whose fellowship was with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup> The "promise of the Father" was fulfilled at length in the formation of a community gathered out of every kingdom and country and tribe.

<sup>1</sup> 1 John i. 1-4.



who were "all filled with the Holy Ghost," who were all called into the "fellowship of the Son of God," who were "all taught of God, hearing and learning of the Father. "He that believeth on me (said Christ), out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. This spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive, for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified." "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth, and he will show you things to come." The history of the Church has been the history of the gift of the Holy Ghost, a gift guarded by the most awful sanctions, and quickening the ear and eye and soul of the disciples to revere and adore the mighty spiritual Presence in the midst of them. Thus the life of God is the life of vision and of faith, of obedience and love. The common participation in this prophetic grace is ever building up the Church, swelling its multitudes, directing its organization, controlling all the forms of common life by the new and heavenly spirit. It is not the organization, nor the logical formulæ, nor the method of working, nor the sacramental seal, but the life of the Holy Spirit in regenerated man, that is catholic and Divine. To put the idea as strongly as I can, perhaps at the risk of some misconception, the relation between Isaiah, Malachi, and John the Baptist, their common penetration into the mysteries of the kingdom, is the type of the relation existing between all who are filled with the Spirit, and are the temples of the Holy Ghost. The parallel between the order of the prophets and the kingdom of God is not violated but vindicated when we remember that the faith of the Christian Church in the future rests, not on a process



of reasoning, not on a demonstrable fact, not on a great inductive law, not on such a proof as we demand for the truths of science, but on the prophetic intuitions of the saints of God. It would not be enough for us to receive such tremendous realities for our own souls, for the world, or for the Church, on the mere authority of those who entertained these hopes, and who have passed away. It is the continual repetition of the glorious prospect given to the soul of the regenerated and spiritual man that has kept the hope of the world from expiring. There is such a thing now as tasting the powers of the world to come, and every one who has truly tasted them is a prophet. How comprehensive is the glance which the new-born soul takes of human life and the world's life, of the destiny of nations and of humanity! How wonderful and assuring the intuition which the spiritual man enjoys of that state of being when mortality shall be swallowed up of life! "No Celestial City!" said Christian to Hopeful. "Did we not SEE it from the Delectable Mountains?"

The words "prophet" and "prophecy" have a more limited meaning in New Testament usage. While the officers of the Church, as such, are never in a single instance designated by any terms borrowed from the rank or functions of the "priest," nor is the slightest hint given that any order or caste of men would be required to act as mediators between God and men, offering up their sacrifice, or vicariously presenting their prayers, or enacting for them the mysteries of their faith; while the duty of the sacrificing priest, so far as it was not finally and for ever fulfilled in the Lord Jesus, is expressly transferred to the whole Church, who are constituted a royal priesthood to offer



up spiritual sacrifices,—there is abundant use of the term *prophet* (with its correlatives) to denote the sacred and special functions of individuals in the Church. This is exactly what might have been expected from the nature of the case. The whole Church may be filled with the Spirit, strengthened to see God, to live the life of faith, to wait for the Son of God from heaven ; yet the power of giving utterance to these deep intuitions, of setting them forth so as to awaken corresponding faith in others, the power of so speaking that a multitude should believe, is something over and above the intuition itself. This Divine gift and call is the prime warrant for the ministry of the Word. The sure and only safe guarantee of the possession of it is the recognition of the gift by the Church itself—by those whose eyes are already open to the kingdom of God.

No training, no human guarantee of fitness, no rank, no appointment by bishop or presbytery, no certificate of education from university or hierarchy, can constitute a true ministry of Christ. The prophetic call accepted by those who are themselves alive unto God through Jesus Christ has in every age and Church overstepped the bounds which human institutions and conventions have erected with a view of limiting and modifying its influence. All that is most venerable and life-giving among the things that have been nourished into life under sacramental orders, and all that commands the homage of mankind ; the grandest self-sacrifice, heroism, and enterprise, have been the offspring of the free prophetic spirit which having chafed at the pernicious bonds within which sacerdotalism would have confined it, has been finally accepted by the prophetic sympathies of the Church. If this dispensation of the



Holy Ghost be not a dream, then we return again to our Lord's words, "He that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he." John occupied the Old Testament platform, even in his prophetic gifts. The prophetic insight, presage, and mission of John were only anticipatory of a wider diffusion of the Holy Spirit. He saw the possibility of it, he knew that the hour was drawing on, and that the Son of God Himself was at hand, who would baptize all who received Him with the Holy Ghost and with fire.

#### § 4. *More than a Prophet.*

The various dignities and singular eminence of John are sufficient to justify and explain the extraordinary distinction conferred upon him by our Lord. It must be remembered that Moses was "more than a prophet." Aaron the priest and Miriam the "prophetess" spake against Moses,<sup>1</sup> and we learn that a special Divine communication was made to the three. A voice issued from the cloud of glory, saying, "If there is a prophet of Jehovah to you (*i.e.*, if you have a prophet), I make myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him (or, in him) in a dream. Not so my servant Moses: he is approved in my whole house; mouth to mouth (answering to the face-to-face of Exod. xxxiii. 11, *i.e.*, without any mediation or reserve) I speak to him, and as an appearance, and not in riddles (visibly, not in a dark and enigmatic way), and he sees the form (similitude) of Jehovah."<sup>2</sup> This implies a higher degree of communion with the living God than could be secured by

<sup>1</sup> Numb. xii. 4-10.

<sup>2</sup> Eng. translation of Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on Pentateuch*, iii. 81; Payne Smith, *l.c.* p. 76.



any prophetic vision, dream, or intuition. Even those who conversed with the angel of Jehovah, under the form of man,<sup>1</sup> did not see so much of God, or come into such relations with Jehovah, as did Moses, the servant of God, to whom was made a direct manifestation of the invisible God, without the mediation of ecstasy, enigma, phantasmic vision, or trance. The extraordinary relations between Elijah and Jehovah more nearly approached this sublime description of the mediation of Moses than those of any other prophet. It becomes therefore full of meaning, that when the Lord was Himself transfigured, there appeared in the cloud of glory, Moses and Elias talking with Him. The two lofty spirits, with whom Jehovah spake face to face, came on this great occasion into personal communion with Him whose humanity was indeed the similitude of Jehovah.

This language of God to Moses throws light on the visions of Isaiah and Malachi. They alike predict the appearance of one who would stand in very intimate relations with the manifested God. Their prophetic visions are blended in the words of the angel who foretold the birth of John, and our Lord makes the fact of this prediction and its fulfilment the ground of His declaration that John was "more than a prophet." As this same prediction forms the burden of the opening ministry of John, and is the summary of all his teaching as given by Mark ; and as, later on in his testimonies, it constituted the substance of his reply to the deputation of the Sanhedrim, as reported in the fourth Gospel ; and as, moreover, it is encumbered with some difficulties, it is desirable to review the evidence on

<sup>1</sup> Ezek. i. 26 ; Dan. vii. 9, 13 ; Delitzsch, Art. on " Daniel," in Herzog's *Ency.*



which it rests. Isaiah <sup>1</sup> represents the approach of the greatest deliverance that Jehovah had ever wrought for His people, the resuscitation of their national life, and gives the assurance from God that Israel had already received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins. "Hark," says he, "a Crier!" The herald has gone forth to break the silence of the deserts that spread between the land of captivity and the land of promise. "In the wilderness (he cries) prepare ye the way of the Lord: make his paths straight." He does not say that the Lord was coming at the head of His hosts, clearing the hindrances out of His own way; but He was coming through the desert to Israel, and therefore Israel was to see that nothing impeded the approach or detracted from the honour due to the coming One.<sup>2</sup> The summons uttered by the mysterious "voice" is imperative, and comes with the authority of one who is intimately acquainted with the purpose of the Most High. "Let every valley be exalted, and every mountain and hill be made low."<sup>3</sup> "Let the crooked or rugged places be made a plain, and the ledges of rocks into a valley;" or, as translated by Luke, "the crooked [shall become] straight, and the narrow ledges into level ways." The prophet continues: "And the glory of Jehovah will be

<sup>1</sup> Isa. xl. 1-5. It matters nothing to my argument whether the last twenty-six chapters of Isaiah are written by the son of Amoz, or by some "great unknown" prophet of the Captivity. The arguments of Prof. Birks (*Commentary on Isaiah*) and Prof. S. Leathes (*Witness of the Old Testament to Christ*) constitute an amount of positive evidence in favour of the tradition of the integrity of Isaiah which ought not to be disregarded.

<sup>2</sup> Delitzsch *in loco* (with whom Rosenmüller agrees) shows that though the LXX. version, which is followed by Matt. iii. 3, connects ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ with βῶντρος, the true reading of Hebrew text connects פֶּדִיּוֹת with הַנֶּחֱלָלִים.

<sup>3</sup> The quotation from this oracle by John (as given in Luke iii. 4-6) is almost a verbatim extract from the LXX. (Alex.) version of the prophet, and transforms the passives into futures. αἱ τραχεῖαι εἰς ὁδοὺς λείας is substituted for αἱ τραχεῖαι εἰς πῆδια: the phrase καὶ ὁφθήσεται ἡ εὐξα κυρίου is omitted.



revealed, and all flesh see it together, for the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it." If the quotation had even been more exact than it is, instead of being taken so loosely from the LXX., the appositeness of the words would have been still more explicit. The old prophet placed himself in (or, as some would have it, occupied) the standpoint of the Captivity; but he anticipated through the entire oracle a state of things which found feeble realization in the return of the holy people from their exile. His eye was filled with a grander vision: and when the children of Israel once more took possession of their fathers' sepulchres and the squalid ruins of their former grandeur, it would have been impossible for them to have seen in the fortunes, the character, or functions of either Zerubbabel, Joshua the son of Josedech, Ezra, or Nehemiah, anything answering to the sublime vision of their prophet. They must still have been eagerly anticipating the salvation and the glory of Jehovah, the honours of their shepherd king, the triumph of the suffering servant of Jehovah. If these words had reference to the approach of the world's Saviour, there is prophetic anticipation not only of His advent, but of human help in the way of preparing for it. The form and voice of a herald is heard. The wilderness of Judæa,<sup>1</sup> both literally and mystically, both in fact and symbol, might be the scene where the herald would do his work. He would come at a time when the hearts of the people would be once more wandering through the wilderness, and repeating their strange departures from the living God. Savage mountains, rugged ridges, rough places, deep stony gorges, were all obstructing the approach of the true

<sup>1</sup> See Witsius, l.c. 52, 53; Delitzsch on *Isaiah*, *in loco*.



Lord; and the herald would call for instant preparation, for deep repentance, for moral amendment, for ready faith, for broken hearts, for fruits of penitence. All the glory of man might perish as the flower of grass, but the word of the Lord would stand for ever. We admit, that if this were all, it would seem a very feeble ground on which to build the claims of the great forerunner. It is, however, the manner of the prophets to dwell on one another's oracles, and the same spirit which first gave in dimmest outline the idea of a concrete human embodiment of the age-long preparation for the Christ, poured forth light over the dark place, and closed the words of the old covenant with new and clearer intimations of the signs of the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. The last of the Old Testament prophets heard the mysterious tone of Isaiah's oracle, and his soul burst into audible consonance with it. The promise of Jehovah, "Behold I send my messenger, that he may prepare the way before me," contains a verbal quotation from Isaiah xl. 3.<sup>1</sup> "The voice" that Isaiah heard "crying, to make ready the way of Jehovah in the desert, that the glory of the Lord might be revealed to all flesh," is here described as "the messenger whom Jehovah will send before him." He is discriminated from "the Lord whom ye seek," who is declared to be "the messenger of the covenant," "the angel-Jehovah in whom the people have delighted."<sup>2</sup> This manifestation of the glory of the Lord is to be a sudden display of His judgment upon all within His holy temple who were violating the terms of their covenant relation; the

<sup>1</sup> וְהָיָה דְּרָגָהּ, Mal. iii. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Delitzsch, *Comm. Minor Prophets*, vol. ii. p. 45.



commencement of a judgment between those who will serve God and those who serve Him not ; a fierce and testing process, which will “purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver.” The whole of the oracle of Malachi throws light upon the burden and teaching of John. There was, indeed, urgent need for a thorough revolution in the popular notion of Messiah. In the view of many He was to be the triumphant judge of the heathen, the punisher and destroyer of the enemies of Israel. Malachi uttered the unwelcome lesson that their Messiah, or, as he puts it, “the messenger of the covenant,” would be a severe judge of the hypocrisies, heartburnings, impurities, neglects of the nominal Israel. “The sun of righteousness” was about to dawn, “with healing in his wings,” upon those that fear the mighty name; but a day was coming that would “burn as an oven,” a day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men, a day in which the proud and all that do wickedly would be consumed. The land might be smitten by the ban which once fell upon the Canaanites, the most utter darkness and gloom might once more fall upon the holy land and people. It is thus, with words that confirm the voices of the elder prophets, that Malachi completes his oracle, and that the sacred canon closes. In order to ward off the foreseen calamity, to prepare the way of the Lord, strange and startling distinctness is given to Isaiah’s vague prediction of “the voice in the wilderness,” “the messenger of the Lord of hosts.” “Behold (said Jehovah), I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord, and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children



to their fathers, lest I come and smite the land with the ban."

These were the last oracles to which the people attributed prophetic authority, and for nearly four hundred years they must have blended with their Messianic thoughts and expectations. These utterances were capable of being grossly misconceived, and helped to create a feverish outlook for their fulfilment. The literature and traditional feelings of the people showed how deep an impression had been made by these sacred words. "Elijah", "Jeremiah", or "one of the old prophets", rather than a new outburst of prophetic energy, was eagerly desired by them. We cannot suppose that John the son of Zacharias was the only great teacher who had been questioned as he was, "Art thou Elijah?" Whether the Tishbite himself was expected to return in his chariot of flame, from the unknown paradise into which he had been caught, or whether his spirit, by a metempsychosis, was to be re-embodied in the breast of some sage Pharisee or brave warrior, or whether the highest stage of Essenic culture was itself the possession of the Elijahship, did not seem to have been settled.<sup>1</sup> One of these modes of return to them was probably in the minds of the deputation from the Sanhedrim, which is mentioned in John i. 21. The Priests and Levites who came to him clearly discriminated the coming and person of Elijah from that of the Christ. Their

<sup>1</sup> For a brilliant sketch of the character and deeds of Elijah, see Dean Stanley's *Lectures on the Jewish Church*, Second Series, Lect. 30, 31. Cf. Mr. Grove's art. "Elijah," in Smith's *Dictionary*. The vision of Elijah is still expected and dreaded. "Abdallah, the fierce lord of Acre, almost died of terror from a vision in which he believed himself to have seen Elijah sitting on the top of Carmel." See *Phœnicia and Israel*, by Aug. Wilkins, for an admirable view of the difficulties which Elijah had to encounter. Mr. Bayne, in *The Days of Jezebel*, gives in poetical form a fine historical study of the same period.



inquiry suggests the intensity of the hope that the prophecy of Malachi was on the point of fulfilment.<sup>1</sup> John's answer in the negative is explicable on the ground that the current expectation as to the method of its fulfilment was false. The translation by LXX. of Mal. iv. 5, viz., *Ἡλίαν τὸν Θεσβίτην*, may have strengthened, as well as expressed, the common mistake. But even with this Greek gloss the people need not have attributed any stricter literalism to the words than to those prophecies in which a no less definite and distinct promise occurred that God would once more send "David" to be their king,<sup>2</sup> which we are not aware were ever interpreted in the same gross fashion. While John was being tempted by the Jews to proclaim himself to be a reappearance of the Tishbite, Jesus was being tempted by the devil to use His supernatural powers for selfish and worldly ends. Each of these temptations was resisted. There are many interpreters who suppose, from John's reply to this inquiry of the Pharisees, that the prophecy of Malachi still awaits literal fulfilment before the second coming of

<sup>1</sup> Schöttgen, *De Messia, Hor. Heb.* vol. ii. 226, quotes a variety of most emphatic representations of this hope from *Pirke R. Eliezer*, c. 40; *Debarim Rabba*, §3, where Elias is promised as a consoler; and from *Adajoth*, fol. 14, as coming to discriminate between things clean and unclean. *Sanhedrin*, fol. 98. 1, quoted in vol. ii. p. 490, offers a long and curious conversation between Elias and R. Josua son of Levi, about the advent of Messiah, which confirms the popularity of the tradition; p. 533, Schött. gives the extraordinary passage from *Pirke R. Eliezer*, c. 29: "The Lord God said to Elias, 'Since thou hast great zeal for me, it shall be that no Israelites shall celebrate the covenant of circumcision unless thou seest it;' on which account the wise men have appointed this custom that a seat of honour should always be placed for him at the performance of the rite." Other passages, pp. 534-537, show that Elijah was expected "three days before Messiah;" "that he would come in the mountains of Israel, weeping over the people, saying, 'O land of Israel, how long will you remain arid and desolate;'" and that "his voice shall be heard from one end of the world to another."—*Talkut Sim*, ii. fol. 53. 3; *Pesikta Rabbathi*, fol. 62, 1.

<sup>2</sup> Ezek. xxxvii. 24; Jer. xxx. 9; Hos. iii. 5.



Messiah and the final judgment upon all the unrighteous.<sup>1</sup> Doubtless there is an apparent contradiction between the point-blank negative of John and the solemn assertion of our Lord in Matthew xvii. 12: "The disciples asked Jesus, Why then say the scribes that Elijah must first come? And Jesus answered and said, Elijah truly shall first come and restore all things. But I say unto you that Elijah is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise also shall the Son of man suffer of them. Then the disciples understood that he spake to them of John the Baptist." Elsewhere the Lord said of John: "This is he of whom it is written, Behold I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee."<sup>2</sup> Without doubt this is a reference to the words of Malachi (iii. 1), which flow on in close connection with his final prophecy of the coming of Elijah. The words of Gabriel<sup>3</sup> throw light upon the entire reference. "He shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient unto the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a prepared people." Here there is a blending of the

<sup>1</sup> Maldonatus, on Matt. xvii. 12, quotes Chrysostom, Jerome, Augustin, to this effect. Alford, on Matt. xi. 12 and xvii. 12, considers that our Lord does not assert that *John* was the full realisation of Malachi's prophecy. Meyer, on the other hand, *Comm. Matt.* xvii. 11. Die ankunft des wirklichen Elias welcher vor der Parusie erscheinen werde ist weder hier noch sonstwo von Jesu gelehrt.

<sup>2</sup> It is very remarkable that in the three quotations of this verse by Evangelists (Matt. xi. 10; Mark i. 2; Luke vii. 27), there is the same deviation from the original text and from LXX. The latter reads, 'Ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ ἐξαποστέλλω τὸν ἄγγελόν μου, καὶ ἐπιβλέψεται ὁδὸν πρὸ προσώπου μου. This is given in all three Evangelists, as though it must have been quoted by Jesus, as follows: ἐγὼ ἀποστέλλω τὸν ἄγγελόν μου πρὸ προσώπου σου ὅς κατασκευάσει τὴν ὁδὸν σου ἔμπροσθέν σου, transferring the address of Jehovah to the people into a special assurance made to Messiah.

<sup>3</sup> Luke i. 15, 16.



early and later portions of Malachi's oracle, with a reference to Isaiah xl. 3, and we find some explanation of the Lord's own words, as well as of those of John himself. He was not Elijah the Tishbite in the carnal sense in which the LXX. and Jewish tradition had expected that prophet to reappear. He had come, however, "in the spirit and power of Elijah." The proof of this lies in the work done by Elijah, and the spirit with which he accomplished it.

Though the prophet Elijah was not an Aaronic priest, his habits, his appearance, his home among the Gileadites of the wilderness, his superhuman bodily vigour, his wild profusion of hair, all indicate the energy with which he was devoting himself, by some fierce ascetic vow, to certain functions resembling those of the Nazarite. Each of these prophets aimed to produce, by stern words and bold deeds, a moral and religious revival. Elijah before Ahab, rebuking sin and appealing to eternal law, was the prototype of the Baptist before Herod Antipas. The romance of the earlier prophet's career was not reproduced in that of John; but while Elijah called fire from heaven, and wielded the dread forces of nature for the overthrow of Baal's worshippers, John threatened a baptism of fire, and told of the wrath to come upon a generation of vipers. Elijah trembled before the curse of Jezebel, and began even to doubt his own mission, until he heard the "still small voice," which assured him of the perpetuity of Jehovah's kingdom and worship, and of the existence of thousands who had not bowed the knee to Baal. John learned gentler lessons from the glance and the voice of Jesus, and though he was bewildered with doubts, he sought the solution of them from One



of whom he had said, "He must increase." "He that cometh from above is above all." Both prophets effected a moral revolution by sharp discipline, corrected mistaken ideas, demanded loyalty to the God of Israel, repudiated latitudinarian compromise, stirred the religious apathy of some, and roused the enthusiasm of others almost to frenzy. Each commenced a work which it was not in his power to complete, created wants he could not supply, and excited fears which he could not allay.

John had no sympathy with the popular superstition that the spirit of the Tishbite was hovering on the hills of Judæa, waiting for a new embodiment. He was not one of the strictest and most exalted of the Essenes, to whom the fathers of the sect would have attributed the Elijahship, and he even disclaimed being "that prophet who should come into the world." He did not refuse either the name or the functions of a prophet; but he knew, from the current Pharisaic interpretation of Deut. xviii., that the Jews meant by their question to connect him with a prophecy which was on the point of full realization in the Lord Himself.<sup>1</sup> It was then because our Lord blended these three prophecies together, and found them applicable to the mission of John, that He gave him the designation of "more than a prophet." He claimed John as His predestined herald and forerunner. By so doing, He assumed for Himself momentous dignity. He identified His own advent with that of Jehovah. He virtually called Himself "the Lord" whom the nation

<sup>1</sup> Reuss, *Theologie Chrétienne*, i. 138, says: "Il n'osait se donner le nom de prophète, bien qu'il le fut dans toute la force du terme;" and on the ground of his modest unwillingness to claim a dignity to which no Israelite had aspired for centuries.



was seeking, the Angel of Jehovah's Covenant, the "Face," or manifestation of the Eternal God. He declared that the whole of John's mysterious mission was prophetic and preparatory to His own. In the words of the Latin hymn—

"Singulari prophetiâ  
Prophetarum monarchiâ  
Sublimatur omnium.  
Hi futurum, hic præsentem  
Hi venturum, venientem  
Monstrat iste Filium."







LECTURE IV.

*THE PREACHING IN THE WILDERNESS.*







## LECTURE IV.

### THE PREACHING IN THE WILDERNESS.

I HAVE already reviewed the many-sided expression given in the career of John to the religious life and institutions of Judaism. He was officially and providentially a recapitulation of everything which priestly rank, ascetic sanctity, and prophetic anticipations could effect as a preparation for the coming of the world's Saviour. The simple fact, viewed on its purely human side, is that a young man of the family of Aaron received a special consecration to a life of self-abnegation and ceremonial purity. The repression of the flesh stimulated all the forces of his spirit. Even the priesthood did not satisfy his yearning after a full consecration to the service of God. The vows of the Nazarite clashed with his love of man, and failed fully to express his sense of sin and need of redemption. The Pharisee, with his deficiency of moral principle, his inversion of the relative importance of Divine laws and traditional custom, his confusion of ethical spirit with punctilious detail, excited the fear of John lest religion itself should prove the ruin of his country. The indifferentism of the Sadducee, while occupying the high places of power and sacerdotal rank, was no adequate safeguard against the ritualism of the dominant religious class. The



societies of Essenes, near the rocks of Engedi or the palm trees of Jericho, provided no hope for the nation as such, and offered no solace to the downtrodden and persecuted race. The cruelty of Herod had been exceeded by the tyranny of Pilate. It seemed as though the irremediable ruin of the national life was creeping on, and the knell of its destiny was sounding.

In some of the caverns which still cleave the limestone rocks of the desolate wilderness that stretches from Hebron to the western shores of the Dead Sea, this youth pondered the signs of his time, and meditated on the secrets of his early days. Within sight of the palaces and the temple of Jerusalem on the one side, and the waters of the Asphaltic Lake, backed by the blue mountains of Moab, on the other, he received his Divine commission. "The word of the Lord came unto John in the wilderness,"<sup>1</sup> and he began with prophetic earnestness to deliver his message. He may have crossed the track of some great caravans as they climbed the mountain gorges which connected Jerusalem with Jericho. At all events, his appearance, his voice, his manner, his message, left little doubt among the people that a great prophet had risen up amongst them. He spoke with the authority of the old Hebrew seer. By common consent, even those who studied the sacred rolls, and believed every *iota* of them to be supernaturally dictated, did not hesitate to admit that John was a prophet indeed. He gave expression to the unuttered groanings of a persecuted race, he fanned the smouldering embers of national hope, he gathered into a focus the enthusiasm of different classes, he

<sup>1</sup> Luke iii. 2.



created a religious excitement of unusual intensity. By turns he warned, threatened, or encouraged the people. He excited a fever of expectation and a prophetic enthusiasm which had scarcely been paralleled since Elijah gathered all the people to Mount Carmel, to decide between the claims of Baal and Jehovah.<sup>1</sup> We need not doubt the substantially biblical character of his instructions, nor is it necessary to suppose him cut off from those influences which introduced Oriental and Alexandrine culture into the Palestinian schools. Some of the tendencies of thought which produced the books of "Wisdom," "Ecclesiasticus," and "Henoch," the "Testament of the Patriarchs," the "Psalms of Solomon," and even the "Sohar," the Targums, and the earliest portions of the Mishna, were at work around him, and were shaping the current opinion of his audience. But John was a prophet, and the word of the Lord came to him. He may have sympathized with Hillel or Philo, he may have been abreast of Gamaliel and Jonathan; but all that we certainly know is, that he adopted a specific line of instruction, of which the outline is given in the synoptic narrative. I therefore propose to discuss the ideas on which we are sure that he insisted. They were trumpet peals rather than propositions, flames of fire rather than dogmatic formulæ.

### § I. *The Kingdom of Heaven at Hand.*

"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." With these thrilling words John and Jesus alike com-

<sup>1</sup> 1 Kings xviii. 19.



menced their ministry,<sup>1</sup> Mark and Luke represent our Lord as using the more familiar phrase, "the kingdom of God," even in places where Matthew uses the words, "the kingdom of heaven."<sup>2</sup> If they too had also reported the earliest message of the Baptist, they might have indicated a similar change of expression in his case. "The kingdom," in Matthew's Gospel, included the earthly and heavenly manifestation of the power and dominion of God, the idealization of the old and the establishment of the new kingdom, and it is just to regard the two phrases as practically identical with each other.<sup>3</sup> If John used either phrase, and declared that "the kingdom of heaven (*or* of God) was at hand," he was referring to a religious and political hope widely diffused and passionately cherished. The origin of the expression may be traced to the book of Daniel,<sup>4</sup> where, after the dissolution of the four great

<sup>1</sup> Mark i. 14, 15; Luke iv. 43; Matt. iii. 2; iv. 17. That which Matthew often denominates "kingdom of heaven" is called by other Evangelists "kingdom of God." This expression does occur in Matthew (vi. 33; xii. 28; xiii. 43; xxi. 31, 43; xxvi. 29), also that of "the kingdom" (viii. 12; xiii. 38; xvi. 28; xxiv. 14); but "kingdom of heaven" occurs twenty-five times. The Rabbinical writers frequently employ it, just as they often make "heaven" a synonym for God. They are not peculiar in this. Oriental literature and modern English make "heaven" the symbol of infinite purity and power.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. iii. 2. Compare Matt. iv. 17 with Mark i. 15; Matt. xiii. 11, 24 with Mark iv. 11, 30; Matt. xix. 14 with Luke xviii. 16; Matt. xix. 33 with Mark x. 24.

<sup>3</sup> An extensive literature exists purporting to throw light on the Hebrew and Christian conception of the kingdom of God. See for the former, Schöttgen, *Dissertatio de Regno Cæli* and *De Hieros. Cælesti, Horæ Heb.* vol. i., and on Matt. xi. 29; Wettstein and Lightfoot (*Hor. Heb.*) on Matt. iii. 2. Koppe, *Nov. Test. perpetua annotatione illustratum*, vol. vi. 417, contains a very valuable *Excursus De Regno Christi formulis βασιλεία Θεοῦ, β. τῶν ουρανῶν, β. Χριστοῦ* *expresso*. Keilius, *Historia dogmatis de regno Messia*, 1781, expounds the later Rabbinical view of the same subject. Tholuck, in his *Commentary on Sermon on the Mount*, E.T., pp. 71-79; Pressel, in Herzog's *Ency.*, art. "Reich Gottes;" Reuss, *Histoire de la Théologie Chrétienne*, i. 172, ff.; Oosterzee, *Biblical Theology of N. T.* p. 68; Neander, *Life of Christ; Ecce Homo*, c. iii. In its relation to eschatology, see last chapter of Langen, l. c.

<sup>4</sup> Dan. vii. 13, 14, 27.



monarchies, "the Son of man is brought near to the Ancient of days, and he receives 'dominion, glory, and a kingdom,' . . . a kingdom which shall not be destroyed," and where this kingdom is promised to "the people of the saints of the Most High." Some of the psalms, however, indicate a strong faith in the virtual reign of Jehovah over the nations,<sup>1</sup> and predict its continuance throughout all generations.<sup>2</sup> Jehovah was the King of Israel, His will was the supreme law of His people, the source of their every right, and the centre of all authority. In some respects this was more evident as a constitutional fact before the founding of the monarchy than it was afterwards. Moses, Joshua, and the Judges derived their authority, not from the national will, not from the army, not by hereditary rights, but by the direct and supernatural call of God, who ruled them by His prophetic Spirit and His miraculous providence. The people were at length eager for a visible and organized authority, a dynasty that should rule over them, and be independent of the fitful manifestations of prophetic force and the spasmodic outburst of special powers. The moral effect of the demand is thus described: "Hearken unto the voice of the people (said the Lord to Samuel), for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected ME, that I should not reign over them."<sup>3</sup> The implication is obvious that a great constitutional change took place at that moment. Nevertheless, the people never lost the sublime idea that Jehovah was their Lawgiver, their Judge, their King; that behind the throne of the king could be seen the Jehovah of hosts seated on His throne.<sup>4</sup> In the strict sense, the period

<sup>1</sup> Psal. xcvi. 1 ; xcix. 1.    <sup>2</sup> Ibid. cxlv. 1, 13.    <sup>3</sup> 1 Sam. viii. 7.    <sup>4</sup> See Isa. vi. 1.



of the Judges was the golden age of the theocracy, and this age was brought to an end when a monarchy was established, which obviated the necessity for recurring to the prophetic voice and to supernatural signs, to Urim and Thummim, to the strange and unaccountable mental powers which enabled obscure men to take the reins of government. Jehovah's reign, His kingdom, His laws, His statutes, His testimonies, His representatives, the mode in which He enforced obedience, the certainty of His judgments, the abundance of His mercies, were themes of prophetic oracle and sacred song; while religious life and worship and duty constituted the politics of this remarkable people. Still, the vision of the perfect establishment of the reign of Heaven upon earth continually faded from the eye of the true Israelite. The perfect King, the Prophet like Moses, the Priest upon his throne, never made his appearance. The hope of the people was often aroused, but never fulfilled. The coming age or "the latter days" would be the realization of their dream. Even the apparent destruction of their nationality in the Babylonian exile did not extinguish their confidence; and while the prophets threatened and cursed the apostacy of the holy people, they reasserted the fact of the Divine kingdom, and foretold anew the re-establishment of the throne of David, the recovery of prosperity, the restoration of spiritual primacy.<sup>1</sup> Larger views of humanity itself began to dawn upon them. Whether we are to attribute their deeper recognition of a future life and retribution to the influence upon them of their Babylonian sorrows, or to special glances of their own seers into the dim future of the

<sup>1</sup> Jer. xxiii. 3; xxxi. *passim*; xxxii. 36, ff.; Ezek. xvi. 60; xxxvii.



human soul, the fact cannot be questioned that the kingdom of God came to mean for Israel something more than an earthly monarchy of fickle fortunes and temporary sway, from the laws, sanctions, and terrors of which exile or suicide might set them free. They now knew that if they "made their bed in hell," Jehovah was there;<sup>1</sup> that they could not escape His control; that as individuals they were and always would be amenable to His laws; that even the dead needed their prayers and sacrifices;<sup>2</sup> that the dream of Oriental sages covered a tremendous reality, which went far to account for the exceeding significance and importance of purity and submission to the will of God, both in their ritual and their theology. Death would not sever them, as some of their fathers had thought, from all relations with the living God, and thus provide an impassable barrier, beyond which His powerful hand could not reach them. Death would only bring them into closer relations with Him than before. The kingdom of God thus stretched out into the unseen world; and the ideas of the immortality of the soul and of the resurrection of the body, which at the time of our Lord, and independently of His direct teaching, many had grasped, must have conferred new meaning on those widely-diffused hopes of the kingdom which the God of heaven would set up. The dark presage of Solomon and Hezekiah must be set over against the hopes of Daniel and the implicit faith of some of the earliest psalms. This belief in immortality was by no means universal, and the gloomy writer of Ecclesiasticus<sup>3</sup> shows that his horizon was bounded

<sup>1</sup> Psa. cxxxix. 8.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Macc. xii. 29.

<sup>3</sup> Ecclus. xl. 5; xli. 1, 2; xxii. 10, 11; xvii. 26-28. Michel Nicholas, *Des Doctrines religieuses des Juifs*, 1860, p. 315, urges that Mark ix. 10 is conclusive



still by earth and time. But it was not so with the author of "Wisdom," who held the immortal blessedness of the righteous.<sup>1</sup> The book of Daniel had prepared the way<sup>2</sup> for the abundant references of the second book of Maccabees,<sup>3</sup> and for the ideas of the book of Henoch.<sup>4</sup> The existence of the soul after death, the resurrection of the just and the unjust, and the absolute dominion of God over both, are taught by Henoch, by the fourth book of Esdras, and by the Sibylline books.<sup>5</sup> The writings of Philo are charged with faith in the immortality of souls, and the sect of the Pharisees held, as a distinctive tenet, the resurrection of the righteous. However, among all who cherished this faith, the kingdom of God would have two vast provinces, the earthly and the heavenly, the visible and the invisible. This would blend their hostile rivalries into an eternal fellowship. The kingdom would exert its sway over men of all nations. It would embrace the shadowy region of the unclothed spirits of men. In Henoch,<sup>6</sup> "the Son of man," brought near to "the Ancient of days," is about to raze kings from their thrones, and to drive them from the assembly of His Church and of the faithful.<sup>7</sup> He will execute judgment in the world, He will effect a resurrection of the righteous and of sinners, He will give a great sword to the long-oppressed people of God. "He will sit upon the throne of his majesty," and "all evil shall

proof that the apostles knew nothing of the idea of a general resurrection. This is incorrect. The inquiry of the twelve had reference to the resurrection of the Son of man. It is reasonable to contrast with it, moreover, John xi. 24.

<sup>1</sup> Wisd. ii. 25. <sup>2</sup> Dan. xii. 2. <sup>3</sup> 2 Macc. vii. 14; xii. 44, 45; Judith xvi. 17.

<sup>4</sup> Row, *Jesus of the Evangelists*, p. 166-190, has most admirably discussed the date and motive of the book of Henoch. See Schultz, *Alt. Test. Theol.* Bd. ii. p. 317, ff.

<sup>5</sup> *Das Buch Henoch übersetzt*, von A. Dillman, sects. xxv., lxi. 5, lxx. 4, lxxxiv., and other places. <sup>6</sup> Henoch § xlv. <sup>7</sup> Ibid. § xlix.



pass away from before his face." His chosen people shall be arrayed in the robe of life, . . . . and the Lord of spirits shall rule over them,"<sup>1</sup> as well as over the tangible, visible, and political relations of earth. Thus the kingdom of God included the sleeping dust and the dry bones as well as the populations of great cities, the dead men as well as the despots and slaves of the earth. This extraordinary development of thought must have coloured all the current notions of the King who should arise to sway the destinies of both worlds. Long brooding on the deep spiritual hints contained in their own Scriptures had enlarged the horizon of thoughtful Jews, and made them anticipate, in the coming kingdom of God, a judgment not only on their enemies, but on themselves. They had a dim hope that Messiah would come as a Son of man in the clouds of heaven, and would occupy the border land between the two worlds; that the veil was on the point of being lifted by the King in His beauty, and that the great and notable day of the Lord was about to dawn in terror on all that do wickedly; that events of transcendent interest and of consummate personal as well as national moment were about to transpire. There is no perspective in prophetic picture. The entire future, including events more or less distant, appears equally near, nor are events seen along the same line and in the same plane of vision chronologically distributed. The

<sup>1</sup> Henoch § lxii. 16. If the book of Henoch was written in the century before Christ, it is very remarkable that no reference should be made to it in the Synoptic Gospels; if in Christian times, it is strange that it should have suffered no modification from the ideal life of the historic Jesus, and contained no reference to His suffering or His death. Notwithstanding the difficulty, it is easier to believe the former than the latter hypothesis. Row, lib. cit.; Westcott, *Introduction to the Study of the Gospels*, pp. 92-101, gives an admirable translation of the most important passages.



atmosphere of earth does not penetrate this region, and there are no units of measurement by which we may gauge its distances. Hence the coming of "the kingdom" involved the restoration of the kingdom to Israel,<sup>1</sup> the restitution of the fallen tabernacle,<sup>2</sup> the sufferings of Messiah,<sup>3</sup> and the glory that should follow. Messiah would come they knew not "whence." He would, according to their notions of ruling, reign from Jerusalem over a subject world. There would be the predicted and coming wrath.<sup>4</sup> There would be the judgment of the living and the dead. Cosmical changes, political revolutions, the reappearance of departed saints, would accompany the entrance upon His kingdom of Messiah the Prince. The prophetic peculiarity of John's mission was that he knew that "THE TIME WAS AT HAND" for the commencement of this programme of the future. He felt that "new heavens and a new earth would immediately appear."

In the wilderness—associated in Hebrew minds with the stupendous events that accompanied the birth of the sacred nation—not far from the spot where they had been baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and purified by Joshua from the uncleanness of the "wandering;" in a region hallowed by the heroism of David and the rapture of Elijah, the last of the prophets cried, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." An electric shock thrilled through the nation. "The kingdom of God is at hand!" Now every throb of pain will be soothed, every wrong redressed, every fear hushed. The heavens will open to receive the faithful, and "the Ancient of days" will be seen in His glory.

<sup>1</sup> Acts i. 6.<sup>2</sup> Ibid. xv. 15, 16.<sup>3</sup> John xii. 23.<sup>4</sup> Cf. especially the dark and sorrowful presage of the fourth book of Esdras.



The previous attempts to realize the ideal kingdom, the earthly types of this heavenly glory, had hitherto been imperfect and transitory; often corrupt, repeatedly disorganized by treachery, and more than once trampled into dust. The prophecy and promise of John must have awakened a passionate yearning.

The corrective of our Lord's subsequent teaching reveals the extent of the impression produced by His forerunner. Jesus admitted that "the kingdom of God had come nigh" unto the Jewish people<sup>1</sup> when He, the Lord and Head of it, began before their eyes "to destroy the works of the devil."<sup>2</sup> But He showed them that though the kingdom was real and resistless, it must be within them, and would not come with observation.<sup>3</sup> Although it was being then set up in their hearts, although for the first time in human history it embodied itself in the perfect life of the God-Man, yet since it was a leaven hidden for awhile in the meal, a seed covered by the soil and sometimes choked by thorns or trampled on by the feet of strangers, it would be long before a triumphant proof of its presence could be given. Therefore the subjects of this kingdom were continually to pray: "Thy kingdom come; thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven."<sup>4</sup>

In one sense the preaching of John struck a chord that vibrated more promptly to his impetuous touch than when its pulsations were corrected and tuned by the hand of Jesus. Under John's preaching, even "publicans and harlots pressed into the kingdom of heaven." The religious enthusiasm thus awakened was intense and prolonged, so that from the days of

<sup>1</sup> Luke xi. 20.

<sup>2</sup> 1 John iii. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Luke xvii. 20.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. vi. 10.



John the Baptist onwards "the kingdom of heaven suffered violence, and the violent took it by force."<sup>1</sup> They who were striving to enter into it, and who were thinking that it must "immediately appear," were also for taking it by storm, and were straining their eyes to see, and longing to realize the dazzling vision. Some were dissatisfied with Jesus because He did not at once throw wide the crystal doors, gather all nations before Him, burn up His enemies, and robe Himself in His imperial glory. Even His disciples were unable to understand the spiritual correctives that He supplied to the popular ideas. They besought Him to call down fire from heaven as Elijah had done, revealing thus their apocalyptic notions of Messiah and His kingdom. The brethren of Jesus, sharing the same spirit, said, "Show thyself to the world;"<sup>2</sup> while even on the night of His Passion, His disciples asked, "How is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us and not unto the world?"<sup>3</sup> Possibly light may be thrown on the conduct of Peter and Judas, on the prophecy of Caiaphas, and on the cry of the dying thief, by supposing, on their part, similar misapprehension of the words of the Master.

During the interval that elapsed between the utterance of these trumpet-peals by John and by Jesus, our Lord told Nicodemus that unless a man were born again he could neither see nor enter the kingdom of God.<sup>4</sup> These words have received abundant comment from the history of the Church. Even now, it is not in pomp and ceremonial, not in any special form of words or method of working; it is not in the literature or the architecture, the organization or the hierarchy, the sacraments or confessions, of any human society, that

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Matt. xi. 12; Luke xiii. 24. <sup>2</sup> John vii. 4. <sup>3</sup> Ibid. xiv. 22. <sup>4</sup> Ibid. iii. 3.



the regenerated man sees the kingdom. If these were the true embodiments of the kingdom of God, they would reverse the judgment of Christ. The same thing might be said with reference to the upheavals of the solid structure of society by physical changes of the universe and of its laws, with some one or other of which some are even now disposed especially to associate the kingdom of the Father. It is as true now as in the days of Jesus, the kingdom of God cometh not with observation. It is within men. Except a man be born again, he cannot see it. But can the kingdom of God ever be remote from men? Is not the dominion of the Lord eternal and universal? Can we conceive an atom or a being in God's universe over which He does not rule? Can anything augment His majesty, or reduce His domain? Surely not,—in the sense in which He is the Supreme Lord and Will; but He has in His wisdom chosen to create a being who in the exercise of his most godlike powers has resisted the Almighty fiat, whose will has been the one force in all the universe that has ventured to defy and to abuse the majesty and the power of God. Man's nature is the very temple-palace, the citadel and throne of God, and yet it has been in wild revolt against Him, filled with His enemies and resisting His Will! The coming of God into our nature was the coming of the Great King. He who knew that the Incarnation of the Son of God had indeed taken place, knew that the Kingdom must be at hand. He who knew that He was Himself incarnate God, the Anointed One, the SECOND MAN who was the Lord from heaven, raised up the standard which had fallen, rebuilt the ruined temple, and manifested



the powers of the Great King. Because the King HIMSELF had come, "the Kingdom was at hand."

### § 2. *The Call to Repentance.*

John and Jesus alike commenced their public ministry by the cry, "Repent ye," and they grounded the call to repentance on the fact that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand.<sup>1</sup> Repentance, as urged by our Lord and His apostles, is the human experience produced by the bestowment of a new and supernatural life. It involves new hopes as well as new fears, reconciliation with God as well as contrition for sin. When "a sinful nation laden with iniquity" was called upon to undergo a complete "change of mind,"<sup>2</sup> sore pain and strange searchings of heart followed. John knew that he could not effect the change which he saw to be imperative, and in this respect he discriminated his commission from that of the Christ. There is no proof that he understood the call to repentance as involving anything essentially different from that which had from time immemorial been demanded by the psalmists and prophets of Israel.

The Psalms and the book of Job imply that grief accompanies the discovery of sinful disposition and conduct.<sup>3</sup> We hear frequently the wail of a broken heart over some great transgression. Solomon, in his prayer of dedication, cried: "If they sin against thee (for

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Matt. iii. 2; Luke iii. 8; and Mark i. 4, with Matt. iv. 17. Matthew and Luke represent John as demanding the moral fruits of repentance. Mark indicates the Divine result conditioned by the baptism of repentance, viz., *εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν*. Cf. Acts xix. 4.

<sup>2</sup> See Schleusner, *Lex. N. T. sub voce, μετανοία*; and Trench's *Synonyms of the New Test.*, seventh edition, p. 241.

<sup>3</sup> Job xlii. 4-6; *ἐφύλιστα ἑμαυτὸν*; Psal. xxxi. 9, 10; li.; reveal various confession of sin and agony, but not *μετανοία*.



there is no man that sinneth not), and thou be angry with them, and deliver them to the enemy; yet if they bethink themselves, and repent, and make supplication unto thee, saying, We have sinned, . . . . then hear thou their prayer and their supplication.”<sup>1</sup> On this principle the repentance of Rehoboam was accepted.<sup>2</sup> Even Ahab and Manasseh, when they humbled themselves before the Lord, were restored to prosperity,<sup>3</sup> and gracious promises of a like kind were made to Josiah.<sup>4</sup> But it is in the words of the later prophets that we find the most evangelical promises and appeals on this subject. Thus, Ezekiel boldly declares that God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that he should return from his way and live. “Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die?”<sup>5</sup> “Oh, Israel, return unto the Lord thy God, for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.”<sup>6</sup> “Repent and turn yourselves from your idols, and turn away your faces from all your abominations, . . . . that ye may be my people.”<sup>7</sup> “Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord.”<sup>8</sup> “Let us return to Jehovah, for he hath torn, and he will heal us.”<sup>9</sup>

Joel anticipated the great and terrible day of the Lord, and he cried in the name of the Lord: “Turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: and rend your heart and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and repenteth him of the evil.”<sup>10</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 1 Kings viii. 23-50. ἀποστρέφειν used frequently.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Chron. xii. 1, 5-7.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Kings xxi. 25; 2 Chron. xxxiii. 6, 9-13.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. xxxiv. 19-28.

<sup>5</sup> Ezek. xxxiii. 10, 11.

<sup>6</sup> Hos. xiv. 1, 2. See also Isa. xxxi. 6; 2 Chron. xxx. 6, 7, 9.

<sup>7</sup> Ezek. xiv. 6, 7. <sup>8</sup> Lam. iii. 40, 41. <sup>9</sup> Hos. vi. 1. <sup>10</sup> Joel i. 13-15; ii. 12, 13.



Keen anguish over sin as a wrong done to God is foreshadowed by Zechariah,<sup>1</sup> while Ezra and Nehemiah entered deeply into its significance.<sup>2</sup> It was not unnatural that the development of this moral and spiritual revolution should have become associated with the kingdom of Messiah and the latter-day glory of the theocracy. Many of these passages are quoted in this sense by the Rabbinical commentators.

Thus: "All tokens of the Messiah are over and gone, His arrival now depends simply on repentance and good works." R. Eliezer teaches: "If the Israelites repent they shall be redeemed, if they do not repent they shall never be redeemed."<sup>3</sup> Again: "The holy God spake to the Israelites, saying, My children, look to the way in which ye go: repent, so will I restore you to your own habitation; as it is written, Turn again, O virgin of Israel, turn again to thy cities."<sup>4</sup> Once more: "If Israel should repent even for one day, then would the Redeemer come." Another writer, quoting Psa. li. 19, says: "Hence we learn that he who truly repents is as well-pleasing to God as if he had returned to Jerusalem, had rebuilt the temple and altar, and brought all the sacrifices demanded by the law."<sup>5</sup> The importance of personal repentance and confession of sin is earnestly insisted upon. "As long as a man lives there is hope that God may have mercy upon him; *i.e.*, if the sinner forsake his evil way, but if he die without repentance all hope is lost."<sup>6</sup> Moreover, we can see in the fourth

<sup>1</sup> Zech. xii. 4, 10-12.

<sup>2</sup> Ezra viii. 21-23; x. 1; Neh. i. 4.

<sup>3</sup> *Chelek Sanhedrin*. <sup>4</sup> Book *Sifri*, on Deut. xi. 15; quoting Jer. xxxi. 21.

<sup>5</sup> *Taanith*, Jer. 64. a.; *Besikra Rabba*, 15.

<sup>6</sup> *Berachoth Jerus.* 35. 2. I am indebted for these quotations to Gfrörer, *Das Jahrhundert des Heils*, ii. p. 152, ff. Compare Alexandre Weill, *Moïse et le Talmud*, p. 214, ff. This writer makes a vehement attempt to show, by quotations from the Talmud, that the Christian doctrine of penitence



book of Esdras the proof that repentance must take place before death. God will neither give nor accept it afterwards.<sup>1</sup>

A remarkable fragment of Philo-Judæus is preserved by Antonius. "Pardon is apt to engender repentance."<sup>2</sup> In the dissertation on the three virtues, the part devoted to "repentance" exhibits the strict meaning of the word *μετανοία*. "For absolutely never to do anything wrong at all is a peculiar attribute of God, and perhaps one may also say it of a godlike man. But when one has erred, then so to change as to adopt a blameless course of life for the future, is the part of a wise man." Repentance is mainly (in this treatise) the renunciation of error touching the Divine nature and civil polity, but broadly, it is "crossing over from ignorance to a knowledge of those things to be ignorant of which is shameful; from folly to wisdom, from intemperance to temperance, from injustice to righteousness, from cowardice to a confident courage." Philo also refers to Moses as delivering beautiful exhortations "to repentance, by which he teaches us to alter our way of life, changing from irregular and disorderly courses into a better line of conduct."<sup>3</sup>

and pardon, and the changeableness of God, is identical with that of the Pharisaic doctors of the time of Christ, and inimical to the genuine law of Moses. The citations made by this writer, in no friendly feeling either to the Talmud or Christianity, do much to prove the diametrical difference between them. The intense and even playful anthropomorphism on which he comments, is fundamentally unlike the doctrine of the Divine humanity of Jesus. The drivelling weakness of the doctrine of pardon, which he cites with triumphant tones from *Sebachim*, lib. ix., is a refutation of the entire theory. "As the sacrifices effect pardon, so also do the garments of the high priest. The tunic causes the remission of the sin of murder, the breeches the sins of the flesh, the headpiece the sins of evil thought."

<sup>1</sup> 4 Esdras ix. 10-12.

<sup>2</sup> *Philonis Op.* Ed. Mangey. Vol. ii. p. 672. Συγγνώμη μετάνοιαν πέφυκε γεννᾶν.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. vol. ii. 405, 406.



It is not necessary to go beyond Holy Scripture to see that repentance, or change of mind, posture, feeling towards God and self, accompanied with voluntary self-humiliation and grief, was supposed by *heathen* nations to constitute the real ground of approach to the majesty and holiness of God.<sup>1</sup> The affliction of the soul, the arbitrary fast, the bowing down of the head, the wearing of sackcloth, were even by Israel thought to be, *per se*, acceptable to the Lord, until sternly rebuked by Isaiah.<sup>2</sup> But the principle pervades much of the Oriental ritual and mythologies, and has obviously been exaggerated and corrupted by gross superstitions. From the self-macerations of the Hindu devotee, from the bloody rites of Druidical worship, from Grecian philosophy and Mexican oblations, the same confession has come, that sin cannot be wiped out without penitence and sacrifice, nor the favour of God secured without self-imposed burdens and sufferings. Neither in Eastern metaphysics, nor in Jewish literature, nor in the words of JOHN, do we find the Christian doctrine of repentance, which makes it on God's side a new creation, a spiritual regeneration, a heavenly gift, a sign and token of grace, and on the human side together with faith, an indispensable condition of forgiveness.

### § 3. *The Wrath to Come.*

Although John based his call to repentance on the approach of the Kingdom, he knew that *that* Kingdom would apply severe tests to all who were morally unfit to receive the King. He broke down the superstition that the Kingdom of Heaven was to bring honour,

<sup>1</sup> See Micah vi. 6, 7.

<sup>2</sup> Isa. lviii. 3-5.



happiness, and exclusive privilege to the Jews. It was accompanied in his mind with judgment and wrath, not necessarily to be executed on all the civil or political enemies of Israel, but on *all* that were doing wickedly. The kingdom of heaven involved to the prophetic eye of John "the wrath to come," and in this respect established and demonstrated his living sympathy with his elder brethren the prophets, who from Hosea to Malachi had continually predicted doom as well as triumph, and foretold a wrath strangely wrought with mercy.<sup>1</sup>

The establishment of the kingdom would be with burning and fuel of fire. The most enlightened zealot and the proudest priest, the learned Rabbi as well as the Gentile proconsul, the Pharisee as well as the publican, were alike exposed to this crucial test. "Repent," said he. "Break up your fallow ground." "Look at life, not in the light of privilege, but in the light of law." "The fire will try every man's work of what sort it is." This expectation of the "coming wrath" was not peculiar to John, for the fourth book of Esdras is specially charged with gloomy foreboding of judgment. Take, for instance, the vision of the MAN rising from the sea,<sup>2</sup> "who sent out of his mouth a blast of fire, and out of his tongue sparks and tempests," which "fell with violence upon the multitude prepared to fight against him, and burnt them up every one, so

<sup>1</sup> Hos. xii. 14 ; xiii. 1 ; Isa. viii. 22 ; ix. 1 ; xxii. 16-25 ; xxviii. 16, 17. Compare the flashes of light which irradiate the destiny of the people in Isa. xl.-lxiv. with the darkness and threatenings of Isa. lxv. and lxvi. 1-4. Again, let Micah's hope and promise be brought into one view with the Lord's controversy with His people, chap. vi. See Joel ii. 30-32 ; Zech. xii. ; and above all the prophetic curse with which Malachi closed his prophecy. See Dean Payne Smith, *Prophecy a Preparation for Christ*, p. 267.

<sup>2</sup> 4 Esdras xiii. 1-50.



that upon a sudden, of an innumerable multitude, nothing was to be perceived but only dust and smell of smoke." This is subsequently interpreted of the torments inflicted by "the law of his mouth, which is like unto fire."<sup>1</sup> Later on,<sup>2</sup> frightful judgments and plagues are described as about to fall on all who sin against the Lord, the lurid representations of which are only paralleled by the vengeance upon Babylon and the beast in the visions of the Apocalypse. There is more of hope and of promise in the words of *Henoch*, but there is the same general outline of judgment upon the powers of evil and the kingdoms of this world.<sup>3</sup> In the later *Targums on the Pentateuch* an expectation prevails of tremendous power in the hands of Messiah, and of a battle between the Sons of the East and Israel, which is to terminate in the utter fall of all her enemies."<sup>4</sup>

It is difficult not to believe that when John spoke of the wrath that was coming, he so far gave expression to a widely-spread, but vague and harrowing fear of a judgment that was on the point of falling upon a guilty world, and upon every soul that was doing wickedly. It was a moral and spiritual change alone which would shield his hearers from the terrors of Divine wrath. The quickened conscience of Israel responded to the summons, and an extraordinary assemblage gathered around him, trembling with terror and often shrieking for help. He took his stand not far from the rose-clad oasis of Jericho. The mountain gorge leading to Jerusalem met the caravan route from southern Peræa near the fords of the Jordan, and

<sup>1</sup> 4 Esdras xiii. 36-38.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. xv. xvi.

<sup>3</sup> *Henoch* § xli.

<sup>4</sup> See Westcott, l. c., p. 114. Much curious information is brought together on this subject from all sources, in Langen, l. c. Thl. iii. cap. 8.



men of every class and tribe and profession were among his eager listeners, and interrupted him with loud cries for help. The population of the metropolis, fresh from temple services and accustomed to the splendours of the proconsular court, the fishermen from smiling Gennesaret, dusky Bedouins from the desert of Gilead, and hated publicans who had grown rich upon the sorrows and burdens of the people, were there. Men and women too, who had found no place for repentance, and who had been rejected by Pharisee and Essene as hopelessly incurable and unclean, heard the "call to repentance," and gathered around the prophet of the Lord, hanging as if for life or death upon his words. It was not with honied promises that he greeted them. Luke tells us<sup>1</sup> that he met the whole multitude with the fierce and terrible cry, "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the WRATH TO COME?" Matthew confines this particular address to the Pharisees and Sadducees, whom he saw coming to his baptism. According to both Evangelists he coupled this trenchant cry with the assertion of:

§ 4. *The Abolition of Hereditary and Abrahamic Privilege.*

Pharisees and Sadducees were more likely than any other classes to need a warning which gives peculiar distinctness to the prophetic teaching of John.<sup>2</sup> These

<sup>1</sup> Luke iii. 7.

<sup>2</sup> These "sects," or tendencies of Jewish opinion, have formed a fruitful source of controversy. Though Josephus was influenced in his well-known representations, *Antiq.* xviii. 1. 3, *B. J.* ii. 8. 14, iii. 8. 5, by a desire to make them correspond with Greek schools of philosophical opinion, and though there is some confusion in his estimate of their religious ideas, these statements are of considerable importance. Compare the great work of Triglând., *De Sectis Tribus Judæorum*, in which that writer edited the treatises



two forms of Jewish thought have been often set forth as types of the traditional and sceptical tendencies in the Jewish commonwealth. The researches of later writers have proved this antagonism to have been less explicit than was formerly supposed. The difference between them consisted in their political sympathies and social position rather than in their theological opinions. The Pharisees were the religious, orthodox Jews of their time. They denounced all foreign admixtures with their primitive faith. They were the national party. They consolidated the religious system of their fathers, elaborated into detail the principles of the Mosaic code, and bound the religious life of their disciples with ever stiffening formulæ which left no room for the free play of the conscience or the heart. The Sadducees, though credited with a denial of the resurrection and of the immortality of the soul, were ready to occupy high judicial and sacerdotal offices. They were subservient to Roman power, had faith in the stability of the constituted authorities, and never doubted their own assured place in the kingdom of Messiah. Pharisees and Sadducees alike made the proud boast, "We have Abraham for our father;" and the later Hebrew literature frequently expresses the conviction that the children of Abraham occupied a position of exclusive and exceptional privilege.<sup>1</sup> In the fourth Gospel<sup>2</sup> they are represented as making their high lineage the ground of a lying boast. The language of our Lord<sup>3</sup> shows that common opinion had

of Scaliger and Drusius. See Jost, *Geschichte des Judenthums*, i. 200-226; Reuss, *Theol. Chrét.* i. c. 4; Neander, *General History of the Church*, i. 84, ff.; Dr. Davidson, art. "Pharisees" in Kitto's *Ency.*; Keim. l. c. i. 251-272.

<sup>1</sup> Lightfoot, *Horæ Hebraicæ*, Matt. iii.; Eisenmenger, *Endecktes Judenthum*, ii. 293; Bisping, *Comm. Rom.* ii. 4; Milman's *History of Christianity*, i. 139.

<sup>2</sup> John viii. 33-39.

<sup>3</sup> Luke xvi. 23, 24.



almost deified Abraham. "Children of the stock of Abraham" was the grandest title by which they could be addressed. Mythical lustre illumined all the historic facts of Abraham's life. The deliverances of Daniel and of the three Jews, multiplied many times, are insignificant by the side of the Jewish and Arabic fables which decorate the Oriental conception of the "friend of God."<sup>1</sup>

The descendants of Abraham resisted the extension of their privileges to the heathen world. The most bitter antagonism which our Lord encountered in both His early and later ministry, the most savage and relentless persecution from which St. Paul suffered, were alike incited by the infringement of the supposed monopoly of privilege entrusted to the seed of Abraham.

The leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees, against which our Lord warned the disciples, was in part the narrowness which sought to restrict the kingdom of Messiah to the theocratic people.<sup>2</sup> The leaven fermented long even in the institutions of Christendom. The animus it engendered embittered the lives of the apostles, and led to the stoning of Stephen and the martyrdom of Paul. Some of the noblest arguments of the Apostle of the Gentiles seem to be but the echo of the cry which John, in sublime independence of the passions, prejudices, and traditions of his hearers, uttered in the wilderness of Judæa, when he cried, "Think not," "begin not<sup>3</sup> to say within yourselves, we have Abraham for our father: for God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham."

<sup>1</sup> Baring-Gould, *Old Testament Legends*, vol. i. p. 171, ff. ; Stanley, *Jewish Church*, First Series, Lect. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Mark vii. 1-30 with viii. 1-13 ; and Hind's *Catech. Manual*, *in loco*.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Matt. iii. 9 with Luke iii. 8.



The horizon of John was not so extensive as that of Paul, yet when he summoned the Pharisee as well as the harlot, the courtly Sadducee as well as the time-serving publican, the Sanhedrist as well as the "mercenary" of Herod, and bade all alike, by repentance, to shield themselves from the storm of coming wrath, he took the highest ground as a great religious reformer. The lofty scorn with which he seemed to treat the proudest boast of Israel reveals the stern, uncompromising spirit of the prophet in almost fierce contention with hereditary privilege. "God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham," was a hard, unsympathetic way of uttering a new truth which has become a common-place of Christianity. In the very form in which the prophet delivered his destructive "burden," he made it quite clear that he was standing on the platform of the old theocracy, but the word was strong enough to shatter the whole fabric to the ground. No institution was so sacred that it could claim exemption from the testing process that was at hand; no office so high, no personage so dignified, as to escape the fiery trial. With military abruptness, with rigid, inflexible sternness, he declared the "axe already laid at the root of the trees." The fruitless lives, the barren orthodoxies, the useless sacraments and dead formularies, the insincerities and inward profligacies of men, are at once to undergo the most searching scrutiny. The day is at hand that shall "burn as an oven," and consume the chaff with quenchless fire. The effect of warnings like these from one whom the multitude hailed as a prophet must have been electric. Along the mountain terraces and rugged foot-tracks, the eager surging crowd were asking the question, "What shall we do?"



Not often has a movement so tempestuous and widespread suddenly broken up the heart of a people. The special answers given by John to the terrified and contrite who came to him for guidance reveal the Hebraic element of his prophecy, and show how much the demand for righteousness enters into the essential nature of religious revival. Unless there be a hunger and thirst after righteousness, the kingdom of God will bring no blessedness.<sup>1</sup>

“Bring forth fruits meet for repentance,” said John; in other words, “Trust no longer to the mere fact of your birthright.” Thus each man was brought face to face with the demand of God’s law, every man’s life was weighed separately in the balance of the sanctuary.

It is necessary to watch this great Confessor dealing with terrified souls, that we may judge him fairly and estimate his relations with the kingdom of God.

### § 5. *The Fruits Worthy of Repentance.*

The most explicit reply given by John to the clamorous cry, “What shall we do?” was that which had been already uttered by Isaiah,<sup>2</sup> and which was familiar to every school of Judaism that was aiming after the higher life. “He that hath two garments let him give to him that hath not, he that hath food let him do likewise.” Our Lord resembled John in the earnestness with which He enjoined works of mercy, and His life was one perpetual exposition of His ideal. But it cannot be said that He followed the lead of John, for the Divine word to which He was accustomed continually to appeal is charged

<sup>1</sup> Cf. 1 Cor. vi. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Isa. lviii. 6, 7.



with the same fine conception of life. Indeed, the conscience of man, from Buddha to Seneca, as with a thousand voices, has urged on the seeker after God works of beneficence and self-sacrifice. The Old Testament is full of the blending and identification of almsgiving and righteousness.<sup>1</sup> Jehovah takes the poor under His special care. Not in Ebionitic ideals, but in the words of psalms and prophecies, we see the full strength of this representation.<sup>2</sup> Job referred to self-sacrificing love as his noblest crown<sup>3</sup> "when the candle of the Lord shone upon his head, and the secret of the Lord was on his tabernacle." The Rabbinical writers, reflecting a spiritual light brighter than their own philosophy, not infrequently transcended the apparent spirit of the Old Testament. The Jerusalem TARGUM on Lev. xxii. 28, says: "Ye children of Israel, as your Father is merciful in heaven, so be ye also merciful on earth;" and our Lord's judgment with reference to the second great commandment of the law finds its parallel in several of the Rabbinical books.<sup>4</sup> The language of Hillel, to which reference has been made,<sup>5</sup> is confirmed by another well known Talmudical book. "On these three things the world rests, on the law, ritual, and works of mercy."<sup>6</sup>

John did not go beyond the current interpretation of the Old Testament, but with prophetic intensity he exhibited the practical power and legitimate fruit of repentance. He did not recommend a communistic

<sup>1</sup> Comp. Deut. xxiv. 13; Dan. iv. 27, with the various readings of Matt. vi. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Prov. xix. 17; Eccles. xi. 1, 2; Psa. xii. 5; xli. 1; Isa. lviii. 6, 7.

<sup>3</sup> Job xxix. 9-16.

<sup>4</sup> Gfrörer, *Das Jahrhundert des Heils*, quotes ii. 170, ff; *Pesachin. Bab.* p. 75; *Kethuboth*, 37, a.; *Sota*, 10, a. b.

<sup>5</sup> See *ante*, p. 7.

<sup>6</sup> *Pirke Aboth*, ii. 9; *Sabbath*, xxxi. a. and v. 18.



sacrifice of personal property. He did not command the man who had only *one* coat to clothe the naked. He reined in the recklessness of self-abnegating love by prudential considerations. He gave his command dogmatically with no other justification than the assurance of "the coming wrath." As in the case of the Hebrew prophets, the reaction upon the almsgiver of his own self-denying gift was held fairly in sight. We see no reason to suppose that this prophetic man rose to the sublimity of our Lord's teaching. It was left for Jesus to declare that "it is more blessed to give than to receive."<sup>1</sup> Christ urged the grander lesson of unrewarded charity, on the ground that His disciples were children of a Father who made His sun to shine on the evil and on the good. He counselled them to hide their charity not only from the world, but from themselves. They were to love each other *as* He had loved them. Love to Himself was to be the motive of expansive love to man. The recompense would be given at "the resurrection of the just." The end of such self-sacrifice was itself noble and worthy of God. It had brought the Son from the bosom of the Father, and He would Himself bestow the spirit of His own love as His richest benediction on the world.

The reception given to Pharisees and Sadducees, emboldened some and compelled other classes to approach John. If the dignity of Abrahamic descent and the splendour of great profession will not avail without deeds of charity to shield from the coming wrath, where shall the publican appear? how shall the outcast, the reprobate, the denationalized tool of Roman ascendancy be spared? The publicans did, however, repent at the

<sup>1</sup> Acts xx. 35.



preaching of John,<sup>1</sup> and submitted to his baptism, while the Pharisees and lawyers rejected him.<sup>2</sup> We are expressly told by Luke that they came with the eager cry, "What shall we do?" A reply was given, differing greatly from that to which they had been hitherto accustomed. They were "sinners above all that dwelt in Jerusalem" or elsewhere. If any class needed pungent, purgatorial test, the publicans required it. The reply of John was not a summons to temple service or sacrifice, nor was it ascetic or revolutionary in its tone. He did not take the opportunity of settling by prophetic word the question between Palestine and Rome, nor did he reveal the great heart of God yearning over the penitent publican, but he proposed a practical test of sincerity which would cut the hypocrite to the quick. "Exact," said he, "no more than that which is appointed you." Extortion was the fierce temptation of the class. It would have been easier for the publicans to keep all the ritual, than radically to change the whole spirit of their lives. Justice, righteousness between man and man, was the great lesson of the law,<sup>3</sup> and formed the refrain of many of the noblest psalms.<sup>4</sup> The righteous Lord loveth righteousness. This same thought was crystallized into many a Hebrew proverb.<sup>5</sup> "Better is a little with righteousness, than great revenues without right." Righteousness was the continually-recurring demand of the older prophets,<sup>6</sup> until the latest of them cried, "I will be a swift witness against false-swearers, against those that oppress the

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxi. 32.

<sup>2</sup> Luke vii. 29, 30.

<sup>3</sup> Exod. xx. ; Lev. xix. 1, 2, 11, 13 ; Deut. xvi. 19, 20 ; xxv. 13-16.

<sup>4</sup> Psa. xxxvii. 18, 37 ; l. 16-21.

<sup>5</sup> Prov. iv. 18 ; xi. 1 ; xvi. 8 ; xvii. 15.

<sup>6</sup> Isa. i. 17 ; xxxii. 6 ; Ezek. xxxiii. 31 ; Jer. ix. 2, 4-6 ; Amos v. 15, 24 ; viii. 4-7 ; Mic. vi. 8 ; Zech. vii. 9, 10 ; Mal. iii. 5.



hireling in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and that fear not me, saith the Lord of hosts." It was a hard lesson to learn, but one that must have cut deeply into the ingrained habits of the publicans. John thus revealed the moral basis of the new kingdom. By this attitude he cleared away a cloud of misconceptions. He tested sincerity in a manner at once definite and practical. His answer involved no doctrine of human brotherhood or divine fatherhood; it was rather a dogmatic appeal to the conscience of men who had laid their ethical sense to sleep. The same voice is still needed in our wilderness. We are required in these days "to prepare the way of the Lord" by a similar summons; and wherever selfishness is taking advantage of circumstances, and sentiment or custom is obliterating the sense of justice, wherever the rich grind the poor, or the poor cheat the rich, there, whether in the Church or in the world, the voice of him who was "more than a prophet" is still urgently needed. The redemption, the salvation, the kingdom of the Christ will be truly heralded by proclaiming righteousness between man and man. God's revelation from end to end condemns a "revival of religion" which does not bring forth this fruit.

Following the request of the publicans, Luke tells us that another class came forward with a similar inquiry. The SOLDIERS, or, more definitely (*οἱ στρατευόμενοι*), those who at the moment were on active military duty, approached him.<sup>1</sup> It matters little what was

<sup>1</sup> Michaelis and others suppose they were portions of Herod's army, consisting of the foreign mercenaries who were employed by him in his campaign against Aretas. Ewald and Meyer suggest that they were merely a portion of the police service, watching for outbreaks between the people and the publicans.



their specific service. They were moved to repentance, and they came with the cry, "What shall we do, even we?" There is room to suppose that the answer previously given to the publicans might be regarded by the soldiers as some kind of justification for their own high-handed acts of reprisal. John tore off the cloak which their professional position was drawing over their selfishness, and he bade them "terrorize no one, and bring no vamped-up worthless accusation."<sup>1</sup> The professional soldier of modern times might be offended by such plain speaking. Armed authority is always open to the temptation of working on the emotion of physical fear. The petty tyrannies of the forced march and the impressed service, the immoral compulsions, the daring and shabby artifices of little souls who make up with sword and drum what they lack in moral fibre, were rebuked. It was no violent change of position that John commanded. He did not bid them lay down their arms, or even put the sword into the sheath. He did not contend against the old order of external things, but he struck a chord which must have vibrated right through their moral nature. If you seek to prove the reality of your repentance, said he, your entire spirit must be changed. There

<sup>1</sup> The word has a curious origin. A *συκοφάντης*, a "fig-informer," was one who watched and informed against persons who exported figs from Athens contrary to law. See Suidas, *s. voce*, who says it ultimately came to be applied to an ill-natured, malicious, groundless accusation, and he defines it as *ψευδῶς τινός κατηγορεῖν*. In the time of Demosthenes *συκοφάντης* had little in common with our *sycophant*, but was (see Smith's *Dict. Antiq.*) a compound of pettifogger, rogue, and liar. Common informations, statutory declarations, were often made in Athenian courts from purely malicious and selfish purposes, and various laws and methods were devised to arrest the evil. Aristophanes tells us "there is no charm against the bite of a *συκοφάντης*," *Plutus*, 885. The verb is used in very much the same sense. Jos. *Antiq.* x. 7. 3; Xen. *Mem.* ii. 9. 5; and in LXX. it is a translation of *רָדַף*. Psa. cxix. 122, "oppress," A.V. Prov. xxii. 16, &c.



were duties incumbent on even the sordid publicans, and there were responsibilities resting on the swaggering mercenaries, which he vigorously enforced ; but he bore down with the moral principles of the old law upon that which was the very key of their position. He called for personal, moral reformation. He did not, in this case, base his appeal on broad principles of ethics, nor did he offer any motive beyond that which he had already clearly intimated. "The axe is laid at the root of the trees, every tree which beareth not good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire." "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." "Bring forth fruits meet for repentance."

#### § 5. *The Near Approach of Messiah.*

John was perfectly aware of the impression produced by his words. He knew that they were breaking stony hearts and crushing strong men. Soldiers were crying for mercy, and feeling the sharp edge of the sword of his mouth. Harlots were weeping, and penitent. Lawyers and scribes might reject his prophetic summons, and consider that his baptism was "of men," but they were afraid to say so. The extortioners and the unjust were putting their house in order. The vague anticipations and unrest of the multitude were assuming a definite conviction that John must be himself more than he professed. "They all were reasoning in their hearts whether he were himself the Christ."<sup>1</sup>

It is not an easy task to throw ourselves back into the position of this eager throng, or to put into words what the people meant when they thus "reasoned."

<sup>1</sup> προσδοκῶντος δὲ τοῦ λαοῦ, καὶ διαλογισμένων πάντων ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις αὐτῶν περὶ τοῦ Ἰωάννου μήποτε αὐτὸς εἴη ὁ Χριστός. Luke iii. 15.



The Messianic expectations of the sacred people are variously estimated. Modern criticism has submitted the “proof-texts” of current interpretation to stringent examination, and not a few have disappeared in the process.<sup>1</sup> The New Testament undoubtedly provides the most valuable testimony to the opinions entertained by thoughtful Hebrews as to the character of Messianic expectations in the first century. But this testimony creates a variety of difficulties, for the Evangelists and Apostles quote many passages of the older Scriptures, which, apart from their authority, we should not have supposed to refer either to the pre-existing Son of God or to the future Christ. Thus the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews treats the Old Testament as radiant with the features and fragrant with the spirit of the Christ.<sup>2</sup>

The Evangelist Matthew makes similar use of the oracles of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, Zechariah, and Malachi. St. Paul, in his Epistles to the Romans, Galatians, and Corinthians, and St. Peter, in his Epistles, and both Apostles in their recorded speeches, summon also from the Old Testament numberless testimonies to the spirit, the character, and the work of Messiah. Their example was followed by the earliest Christian Fathers and Apologists, who continually appealed to the Old Testament, as though it had been the voice of the living and eternal Son of God, and had furnished contemporary testimony to the character,

<sup>1</sup> Compare Hengstenberg, *Christology of the Old Testament* [4 vols. in Clark's trans.]; Dr. J. Pye Smith, *Scripture Testimony to the Person of Messiah*, with the recent articles in the *Theological Review* by Dr. Davidson.

<sup>2</sup> Thus, *e.g.*, the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews quotes from *Psa.* ii., viii., xlv., xcvi., cii., cx. ; also from *Isa.* viii., *Jer.* xxxi., and *Psa.* xl. and xcv., as distinctly and without controversy containing the foreshadowing and revelation of the Christ.



mission, and offices of the Christ. The Targums and Talmudical literature are still further charged with the same spirit, and discover the "King Messiah" in a multitude of passages, where legitimate criticism can see simply an historic fact or a moral principle.

Now whether the views of the Jews at the time of John and Jesus were justifiable or not, whether they were the offspring of a heated fancy and perverse exegesis, or the legitimate outcome of the literature which they were guarding so jealously and studying so closely, it is an undoubted fact that they *did* entertain definite ideas with reference to the programme of their national future, and the character and functions of their great King. Injustice is done to them when they are charged with the sin of not discovering all that *we* reverently believe is to be found in the Old Testament. They, like us, were "slow of heart to believe all that the prophets had spoken." But their literature proves that as a matter of fact they found more and believed more touching the Christ than meets our modern gaze or satisfies our critical taste.

The New Testament makes it evident that the priests and scribes entertained a dogmatic opinion that the Christ would be born in Bethlehem,<sup>1</sup> of the seed of David; though on another occasion they exclaimed, "When the Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is."<sup>2</sup> This probably referred to the opinion entertained by the Targumist on Micah, that the Christ lived in a secret place in Paradise before His mundane manifestation.<sup>3</sup> Opinions were divided, and clashed.

Nathaniel attributed to the Christ the twofold func-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Matt. ii. 4-5 with John vii. 41, 42.

<sup>2</sup> John vii. 27, 31.

<sup>3</sup> See Lange, Tholuck, *in loco*, and Gfrörer, l. c. ii. 223.



tion of the "Son of God and King of Israel."<sup>1</sup> The challenge of the high priest,<sup>2</sup> "Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed—the Son of the living God?" shows that the two ideas were blended in the Jewish mind. The cry of the demoniacs proves—even if we take the lowest ground—that the most neglected as well as the more enlightened Jews believed that the Christ would prove to be a strong "Son of God," able to punish and torment the evil spirit.<sup>3</sup>

We learn from Matthew that some at least believed that the Christ would take their infirmities and bear their sicknesses, and thus fulfil the great oracle of Isaiah;<sup>4</sup> and it is clear from the fourth Gospel that they expected Him to show signs and wonders to excite their faith.<sup>5</sup>

The perpetual demand for a sign from heaven points back to the great prophecy of Daniel,<sup>6</sup> on which the author of *Henoch* had probably already enlarged, and derives further illustration from the Lord's own declaration that many false Christs would appear, would show signs and wonders, and would deceive many.<sup>7</sup> These celestial manifestations were associated in their minds with the triumphant restoration of the throne of David and the kingdom of the saints of the Most High. The latter hope appears in the language of the angel to Mary, in the song of Zacharias, in the querulous demand of the brethren of Jesus, in the cries of the despairing and diseased, in the hosannas of the multitude, and is justified by the solemn admissions of our Lord.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> John i. 49.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Mark xiv. 61; Matt. xxvi. 63.

<sup>3</sup> Mark i. 24; v. 7.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. viii. 17; Isa. liii. 4.

<sup>5</sup> John vii. 31.

<sup>6</sup> Dan. vii. 13; *Henoch* [Dillmann's *Ed.*] §§ lx.-lxiv.

<sup>7</sup> Matt. xxiv. 30.

<sup>8</sup> Luke i. 49-54, 69; John vii. 4; cf. Acts i. 6; Matt. xx. 30; xxi. 9, 15; xxii. 42.



It is an interesting question how far these widely-spread impressions, hopes, and fears, were due to the teaching of John, or had been quickened into intense activity by his prophetic voice. It is not unreasonable to associate in some degree the division of popular sentiment, the obvious clashing of current expectations with the twofold, and even dissimilar testimonies borne by John to the idea of the Christ. Before discussing this question, it is necessary to revert to other sources of information. It is certain that Josephus had lost all faith in the coming of a Christ, and with the exception of one doubtful passage, he can hardly be credited with having alluded to the Messianic hope of his nation; nor can Philo—unless he were concealing it under his doctrine of the LOGOS—be said to have given to it any utterance or exposition. There is some reason to believe that Philo did follow the Alexandrine interpretation of certain famous prophetic oracles,<sup>1</sup> and Keim refers to a few isolated, fragmentary hints which might possibly take a Messianic colouring,<sup>2</sup> but they are lost in the midst of voluminous speculations, which do not reveal a gleam of this national expectation. Such as they are, the philosopher hopes merely for some celestial manifestation in the clouds of a god-like image, visible only however to the redeemed. Keim also thinks that Josephus had not relinquished his faith in Hebrew prophecy. “In his heart, the book of Daniel is applied to Israel, if not precisely to the Messiah.” This however is meagre proof of the extent of the Hebrew expectation at the time of Jesus. If we did not possess the abundant illustration of the

<sup>1</sup> Keim, l. c. 316, and Langen, l. c. 400, call attention to Philo, *De Conf. Ling.*, where Psa. cx. 3 and Zech. vi. 12 are interpreted of the Logos.

<sup>2</sup> Philo. Op. [Ed. Mangey, vol. ii. 423] *De Præmiis et pænis*.



vitality of this hope which is contained in the pages of the New Testament and in the subsequent literature of the Jews, Josephus and Philo would throw little light upon the subject. The "Sibylline Oracles," in the form in which they have been preserved and edited,<sup>1</sup> cover many centuries, and contain vaticinations, inextricably mingled, from Jewish, heathen, and Christian sources, yet they are not without their bearing on the tempestuous condition of the Jewish mind during the entire period; while they set forth the wild, confused, and gorgeous visions which danced before the popular gaze, and gave a character to the people themselves and to the estimate in which they were held by foreign nations and by Roman poets. The same may be said of the book of Henoah and the Ascension of Isaiah, and also of the fourth book of Esdras and the Psalms of Solomon. It is not certain how far these fragments preceded the advent of the Christ; but it is certain that if they did so, they utterly failed to provide the material out of which the "Jesus of the Gospels" was created. There is more than enough to show that the people generally were expecting a sublime yet lurid blending of heaven and earth; a vengeance upon the enemies of Israel, a new heir and occupant of the throne of David, a political Leader, a great Prophet, a resistless King, who should use his supernatural powers to promote their interests, to judge the nations, and to place *them* in a position of civil, intellectual, and political supremacy. Others of softer, gentler mould, "waited for consolation and redemption in Israel," yearned after personal forgiveness, and

<sup>1</sup> Bleek, in Schleiermacher's *Theol. Zeitschrift*, ii. 192, has submitted them to careful criticism. See abundant use made of Bleek's work by Moses Stuart *Comm. Apoc.* § 6, and Langen, l. c. 401, ff.



believed that when Messiah came He would search all hearts and know all things, and would prove Himself to be the Saviour of the world.<sup>1</sup> Ideas of this kind, varying with the temper and disposition of each individual, were circulating freely among the eager multitude who had come to John with the cry, "What shall we do?" He did not misconceive the sign of the times. He knew that he was the herald of Jehovah, and that it was his commission to turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. John did not limit the promises he uttered to the establishment of a *kingdom*, he boldly proclaimed THE COMING ONE [ὁ ἐρχόμενος]. The people did not misunderstand his reference. He believed in a *human* manifestation as well as a *Divine* Providence. More clearly than any current literature or any of the popular teachers had done, John identified the coming of THE LORD with the approach of MESSIAH. "The coming one" is said by John to be "mightier than I [ἰσχυρότερος μου], whose sandals I am not worthy to carry."<sup>2</sup> As a *Man* walking the earth, rather than as an angel coming in the clouds, John expected Him to make His appearance and to do His strange work. The dominant idea in his mind was strength rather than mercy; "the Mighty God" rather than "the Good Shepherd" or "the Prince of Peace." John was himself "strong in spirit," but he trembled at the advent of One whose spirit would be stronger than his own. He believed in a MAN who would be as the angel of the Lord before them. The multitudes might revere his own austerity, or hurry to his baptism, or discuss the question in his presence

<sup>1</sup> Luke i. 69, 74; ii. 25, 38; John iv. 25, 42.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. iii. 11. Luke reports it, "The strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to loose." Mark adds, "to stoop down and unloose."



whether he was THE CHRIST; but so profound were his feelings about the unseen King, then standing on the threshold of His temple, that in the very spirit of the "swan-like song" which some critics believe to have been far too spiritual to have proceeded from him, he cried, "His shoe-latchet I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose." Before he saw Him, he felt that he was not worthy to be His menial slave; when he had beheld the glory of His love and sympathy and sacrifice, he called himself "the friend of the bridegroom, rejoicing greatly at his voice."

What did John mean by the declaration that the coming one would be "mightier" than himself? The word (*ἰσχυς*) is used elsewhere of physical and moral energy. The "power that belongeth to God," and is imparted to His servants, is in numberless passages of Scripture conspicuously manifest in the giving of life and the destruction of evil.<sup>1</sup> Now John is explicit. "*I indeed baptize you with (or in) water unto repentance; but he shall baptize you in (or with) the Holy Spirit and in fire.*" This memorable saying is recorded by three Synoptists,<sup>2</sup> and is confirmed by the subsequent testimony recorded by the fourth Evangelist,<sup>3</sup> by Christ Himself,<sup>4</sup> by Peter,<sup>5</sup> and by Paul,<sup>6</sup> on occasions memorable in the history of the Church. When John used the language, he had not seen the Spirit descend upon the Son of God. He had accustomed the people to a ceremonial consecration, and felt its utter incapacity to answer the questioning or soothe the agitation that his ministry had awakened. By prophetic glance, he saw the Messiah wielding the powers of the Divine and

<sup>1</sup> Psal. lxi. 11; cxlviii. 5; cx. 2, 3; Deut. xxxii. 39.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. iii. 11, 12; Mark i. 8; Luke iii. 16.

<sup>4</sup> Acts i. 5.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. xi. 16.

<sup>3</sup> John i. 33.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. xix. 4.



Holy Spirit, and declared that the coming Christ would deal with the Holy Spirit as he was then dealing with water. He says, in other words, "He will submit you to a spiritual lustration, of which the water-baptism is a mere type and symbol. You pledge yourselves to repentance by accepting the water-cleansing. If you submit to *His* baptism, it will be the reception of a spiritual force, which I have no power to convey by water or by word. John administered water as the medium of effecting a change in the external relations of the people with the kingdom of God. The approaching Christ would administer a spiritual energy of such potency that it would transcend the noblest and richest gifts of God. Jehovah had been frequently represented as "giving," "pouring out," producing life by his Holy Spirit.<sup>1</sup> This had been the method by which God had come into personal relations with men, but the objects of this supreme favour were few in number. "The Spirit of God" spake by the lips of "the sweet singer of Israel," and gave all its intensity to the life of the greatest of the prophets. But there was treasured by John a sublime hope which lifted him to the rank of the most gifted seers. The latter-day glory was about to dawn upon the world, and would consist in the outpouring of the Spirit upon all flesh. At the hands of the coming Christ, old men and maidens, the weak and the erring, as well as the Pharisee and the scribe, would receive the heavenly unction. The ministration of the Spirit by Messiah would have a glory transcending all the ministration of death. John knew that his own burning words had

<sup>1</sup> Isa. xxxii. 15-17 ; Ezek. xxxvi. 25-27 ; Zech. xii. 10. On the Old Testament doctrine of the Holy Spirit, see Langen, Gfrörer, Schultz, Steudel.



neither consumed the sins, nor purged away the dross of the people. He left their repentance, their reformation, as far as his work was concerned, in their own hands. He bade them flee from the coming wrath, but he could not sanctify them. He reuttered the sternest enactments of the law, but he knew that this could not realize the ideal that he had conceived, nor effect the change he prophesied. He knew there was a vast reserve of spiritual force, which would work mightily in the hearts of men, would move them from within, would make divine prophets of them, would stir them up into living active fellowship with the will of God, would be in fact a new and clean heart in them, and a right spirit. The vision that swept across his eyes—and that still gleams in the horizon of all faithful men—was that the Spirit of the Lord should be so given to the men of his generation, that they should be all righteous, that “the wilderness might become a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be accounted a forest.” He knew that the Son of David, the strong Son of God, in doing this would prove that He was mightier than himself.

This is *one* element of the might of the Christ as conceived by John, but it is not the only one. How could the Elijah of the New Testament hide from view the searching, testing, refining FIRE of which Malachi had spoken? “Who may abide the day of his coming? who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner’s fire, and like fullers’ soap: and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. . . . Behold, the day cometh, that shall burn



as an oven; and all the proud, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.”<sup>1</sup>

It was not strange that John should have added—“He shall baptize you with fire”—“And now also the axe is laid to the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire. His fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather the wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

There are three elements in this process. (1) There is a judgment (a discrimination) which will separate the righteous from the wicked, which will single out those who are guilty of moral insensibility to Messiah's work, and will mark them off for destruction. This is the condemnation, that light is come, and they love darkness. The kingdom of God will come nigh unto them, and some will not see it nor enter into it. Some who say they see will be made blind, and their blindness will become manifest. It will be more tolerable for Sodom in the day of judgment than for them. The Son of man will separate the peoples one from another, “as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats.” (2) There is the solemn search after the fruits of high profession, and the looking for of judgment and fiery indignation on the untruthful and unfruitful. The king will come in to see his guests, and will dismiss into outer darkness the man who has no wedding garment on, even though he was brought into the feast from the highways and the hedges. The withered fig

<sup>1</sup> Mal. iii. 3; iv. 1.



tree expounds the parable of the unfruitful vineyard. The fire of the judgment will leave neither root nor branch. The axe is laid at the roots, and the fire is already kindled. (3) There is the purifying of those whose corruption is not complete, of those institutions which are capable of reformation and renewal. The dross will be burned out of the gold and silver ore. God will search and try, will scorch and smelt the true metal in the furnace, and He will sit as a refiner, and will purify the priestly race, that they may offer a true and pleasant sacrifice. The Mighty One is to thresh the precious corn, to winnow the chaff, to scatter and burn the worthless stubble. The fire must try every man's work, of what sort it is.

The forerunner's conception of the Mighty Man's work is sustained by the teaching of the Master, by many parables and burning words in the course of His ministry; by the effects of His personal humility on human pride, even by the wild passions which His goodness roused into fierce activity; by the sifting of His own disciples; by the agony in the garden and on the cross; and also by the tribulation, the cruel mockings and scourgings, the bonds and imprisonment, which test true love and consume weak faith; by all the history of the Church of Christ in the world, and by the solemn foreshadowing of future judgment.

It must not be forgotten that the testimony which the people bore to Jesus in the place where John at first baptized was this: "John did no miracle, but all things which John spake of this man were true." The ministry of the Spirit, in the hands of Jesus, was mightier in its power of suasion, more penetrating and life-giving, than that of John. There was a might in His love which



drew the little children to His arms, a might in His purity which made the devils tremble, and hypocrites pass silently and self-condemned out of His sight. There was might in the attraction of His cross, in the tears that He shed and the love that He lavished ; but His word was "quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword." He came to "bring fire on the earth." It was "already kindled" when He spake, and it has been burning ever since.

Did John conceive of the ultimate judgment to be inflicted upon the wicked, the fruitless, and the faithless, as stretching out into the future life, and involving the endless torment of those subjected to the baptism of fire? The phrases used unquestionably speak of two classes of things, (1) unfruitful persons or institutions, which are like barren trees to be cut down and destroyed ; and (2) worthless ingredients mingled with the life and work of individuals, which, like chaff and dross, are to be separated from that to which they cling, and are themselves to be burned up. In this latter case the "fire" performs its purifying process by absolutely annihilating the evil passion, by reducing to dust and ashes all useless and pretentious work. That the fire is "quenchless" is a glorious assurance, for in this lies the hope of deliverance. In the former case there is no hint of anything but the destruction of the worthless trunk, the fruitless branch, the useless root. When these are cast into the fire, they are no longer wood ; they are, in view of the older physics, destroyed for ever. It cannot be said that John looked farther than the judgment on the present forms of life, than the severance of good and evil persons by the work of Messiah, than the removal of the evil from the good, and the destruction by the



hands of Him who is "a consuming fire" of all that do wickedly, and of all sinful deeds.

It is instructive to observe that St. Luke speaks in remarkable terms of this early ministry of John. He sums it up thus: "With many other things exhorting, he preached glad tidings to the people."<sup>1</sup> These solemn searching words, touching the kingdom of God, touching righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, concerning the destruction of hereditary privilege, the urgent need of repentance, the certain approach of a day that should burn as an oven, and of the purging, leaping, quenchless, consuming fire, are, in the mind of the great Evangelist, A GOSPEL.

<sup>1</sup> Luke iii. 18.



LECTURE V.

*THE TRANSITIONAL WORK OF JOHN.*







## LECTURE V.

### THE TRANSITIONAL WORK OF JOHN.

#### § I. *Baptism.*

THE preacher in the wilderness did not confine his ministry to warnings, counsels, and prophecies. He adopted a special method of evoking, symbolizing, and invigorating the faith of his hearers. It is not *necessary*, nor is it *possible*, to claim for John complete originality in his choice of this symbolic ritual. It is not "necessary," because every element of Hebrew faith and ceremony had its parallel in surrounding nations. Circumcision was not confined to the children of Israel or of Abraham. The temple service, the altar, the priesthood, the prophetic order, and the ascetic institute, had all received abundant illustration both within and beyond the limits of the theocracy: why should the baptismal rite be regarded as a perfectly original or special inspiration of John? It is not "possible" to make the supposition, in view of the varied lustrations and baptisms which prevailed throughout the civilized world. Among the Greeks, initiation into special mysteries,<sup>1</sup> and the lustration of

<sup>1</sup> *Dict. Antiq.* art. "Cotyttia." The priests of the Thracian goddess were called βάπται.



cities, of armies, and of individuals, were effected by the sprinkling of water upon the persons or objects seeking to secure the favour or to avert the anger of the gods.<sup>1</sup> The Romans had the custom of washing away sin by dipping the head in the waters of the Tiber.<sup>2</sup> The Hindu worship has always consisted largely in lustral rites, which were celebrated on the birth of a child, on its reception into its own caste, on the consecration of an idol, and in anticipation of death,<sup>3</sup> as well as in the daily round of Brahmanic ceremonial.

The directions of the *Avesta* with reference to a vast variety of purifying ceremonies, show how widely the custom had spread throughout the East. Justin Martyr was so struck with the resemblance between the ceremonies of heathenism and Christian baptism, that, according to his wont, he explained the circumstance by the malice and ingenuity of the demons.<sup>4</sup> There does not appear to have been associated with any of these purifying rites an ethical idea. The purity aimed at was for the most part physical, not moral; the method taken to secure it aimed at no higher cleansing, and therefore often reflected the dualistic theory of the corruption that was supposed to be inherent in matter, and which was thought to appertain to the body and all its functions. The ceremonial defect that was removed by ablution was not infrequently a necessity

<sup>1</sup> As Athens, after the murder of Cylon. *Diog. Laert.* i. 110. The *καθαρμοί* and *τελεραί* of Musæus contain abundant directions on this subject. See Baring-Gould, *Origin and Development of Religious Belief*, vol. i. 397; Döllinger, *Gentile and Jew*, vol. i. 220, ff.

<sup>2</sup> Juvenal, *Satir.* vi. 522, ff.; Cicero, *De Legibus*, ii. 8. Cf. Döllinger, l. c. ii. 83, 89.

<sup>3</sup> Wuttke, *Geschichte des Heidenthums*, ii. Th. p. 380. See Appendix.

<sup>4</sup> *Apol.* i. c. 62.



of nature, a physical accident, or some arbitrary restriction debarring from the enjoyment of religious distinction and privilege. The same class of remark must often be made when dealing with the ablutions of the Hebrew ritual. Thus the first step taken in the consecration of the tribe of Levi to the service of the tabernacle was to "sprinkle water of purifying upon them, . . . and let them wash their clothes, and so make themselves clean."<sup>1</sup> The cleansing and the uncleanness were institutional and arbitrary. The same must be said of the uncleanness effected by touching the dead body of a man.<sup>2</sup> Arméd men, when they went to battle, received the ceremonial ablution, and their weapons, ornaments, and dress were religiously cleansed before they entered the camp.<sup>3</sup> The Pharisees were most profuse in their ablutions, and in this respect they were imitated by the Essenes.<sup>4</sup>

There was in the days of our Lord much ceremonial ablution, not only of the person, but of "cups, pots, brazen vessels, and tables."<sup>5</sup> Christ denounced the custom as a vain, if ancient tradition. Still, notwithstanding these references, there is nothing either in the Old Testament, in Josephus, or in Philo, fully to explain the ceremonial of initiation and confession adopted by John. It has, however, often been observed that the manner in which both Josephus and the four Evangelists refer to John's baptism, and particularly the discussion of John's claim to baptize his followers, present a *primâ facie* proof that, independently of John's

<sup>1</sup> Numb. viii. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. xix. 13-20.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. xxxi. 21-24. See also Exod. xl. 12.

<sup>4</sup> Josephus, *B. J.* ii. 8. 5; *Chagiga*, 18 b; *Berachoth*, 24 b, quoted by Ginsburg, l. c. p. 48.

<sup>5</sup> Mark vii. 8. See Danzius, *Baptismus Proselytorum Judaicus*, edited by Meuschen. *Novum Test. ex Talmude Illustratum*, §§ 5-10.



baptismal summons, the Jews were familiar with the ordinance.

Great difference of opinion has prevailed as to the date of the origin of proselyte-baptism, and this difference has been aggravated by the supposed connection of the question with both the mode and the subjects of Christian baptism.<sup>1</sup>

The frequent references to the baptism of proselytes in the Rabbinical and Talmudical literature are not disputed; but the strained biblical exegesis of the *Gemaras* is supposed by many to be countervailed by the silence of more ancient authorities. The Rabbis cite numerous instances of baptismal initiation into the theocratic community, but neither the Septuagint nor Josephus sustain their view of these events. Thus the LXX.<sup>2</sup> translate "became Jews" by *περιετέμοντο και Ιουδαίζον*, and nothing is said of "baptism" on an occasion where, if it had been a customary practice, it would have occurred. Josephus, when detailing the forcible proselytizing of Idumæans and Ituræans, had several opportunities to have also mentioned their baptism, but he simply refers to their being circumcised.<sup>3</sup> This silence is not conclusive as to the absence of baptismal ceremonial, for in the same way it might be shown from Holy Scripture that *circumcision* had been

<sup>1</sup> Among the defenders of the originality and antiquity of proselyte-baptism, and the dependence thereupon of John's baptism and of Christian baptism, may be reckoned Lightfoot, *Horæ Hebraicæ*, Luke iii. ; Danzius, *lib. cit.* and *Antiquitas Baptismi Initiationis Israelitarum Vindicata*; Wall, *History of Infant Baptism*, 1720; the pietists, Arnold and Spener; Deylingius, Michaelis, Kuinoel, Neander, E. C. Bengel, Dr. Halley, and others. On the other hand, the Lutheran theologians have maintained the originality of John's baptism, and also of that of our Lord and of the apostles, and have repudiated the antiquity of Jewish baptisms; so, also, Witt, 1708, J. Owen, Schneckenburger, Matthies, *Baptismatis Expositio*, 1831, De Wette, Leyrer, art. "Proselyten," in Herzog, *Encyc.*, Doddridge, and Moses Stuart.

<sup>2</sup> Esther viii. 17.

<sup>3</sup> *Antiq.* xiii. 9. 1, and 11. 3; xx. 2. 4.



neglected by Israel, as, with the exception of occasional symbolical reference to the custom by Jeremiah and Ezekiel,<sup>1</sup> there is (as Dr. Halley remarks) “no mention of the positive observance of the rite, from Joshua to John the Baptist.”

The Rabbis found the earliest instance of baptismal initiation in the books of Moses, and said that the daughter of Pharaoh underwent the rite in the Nile,<sup>2</sup> that it was common in the days of David and Solomon,<sup>3</sup> that it took the place of circumcision in the admission of women to the covenant; whilst it would seem that after the destruction of Jerusalem it became the chief rite of initiation into the kingdom of God as conceived by them.

There is a fragment in the *Mishna* which must be regarded as the earliest reference to a baptism of proselytes into the Jewish faith. It occurs in *Pesachin* viii. 8, and is to the following effect:—

“As to a proselyte who becomes such on the evening of the Passover, the followers of *Schammai* say, ‘Let him be baptized, and let him eat the Passover in the evening;’ but the disciples of Hillel say, ‘He who separates himself from the prepuce, separates himself from the sepulchre.’”<sup>4</sup>

The Babylonian Gemara further assures us that—

“If a proselyte has been circumcised, but not baptized (R. Eliezer says), he is a proselyte; for so we find among our first fathers, who were circumcised, but not baptized. But should one be baptized, and not circumcised (R. Joshua says), he too is a proselyte; for we find this to have been the case with our first mothers, who were baptized, but not circumcised. But the wise regard both as necessary conditions.”<sup>5</sup>

The baptism of the children of proselytes is referred

<sup>1</sup> Jer. iv. 4; vi. 10; ix. 26; Ezek. xlv. 9.      <sup>2</sup> *Sotah*, 12. 6; *Megill*, 13. a.

<sup>3</sup> *Jebamoth*, 46. 6.

<sup>4</sup> Moses Stuart, trans. in *Bib. Rep.* April, 1833.

<sup>5</sup> *Jebamoth*, 46, quoted by Lightfoot, *H. H. Matt.* iii. ; by Matthies, l. c. p. 35, and Danzius.



to in the Babylonian Gemara.<sup>1</sup> It is also stated that the rite was not administered until the wound of circumcision was healed,<sup>2</sup> and that it was not allowed to take place in the night time.

Maimonides in the twelfth century,—an indifferent authority certainly for what had been Jewish custom in the first century,—makes frequent mention of the rite of baptism, of its peculiar relation to women, of its being a substitute for circumcision, and of its administration to the children of Gentile proselytes, and he lays stress on the complete immersion of the naked body in the water.<sup>3</sup>

The authority of these quotations is not conclusive, but it is thus rendered probable that long before the completion of the *Gemaras* the Jews were in the habit of admitting Gentile proselytes into their fellowship by a baptismal ceremony. They are not likely to have borrowed the custom from the Christian Church, and the inference is that it had prevailed in the first century, and also at the time when John came preaching in the wilderness of Judæa. The form and spirit of the ceremony were well understood. Lustrations were common in the temple service, and in the customs of both Pharisees and Essenes. The originality of John's procedure was that he called the *sacred people themselves* to repentance and to baptism. The privilege to which he summoned the multitudes was something additional to Jewish faith, to Abrahamic descent, to paschal festivals. By this act he made disciples. They received from his lips a reutterance of the Law, a fresh

<sup>1</sup> *Erubin*, II. 1, quoted by Lightfoot, *H. H. Matt.* iii. 5, 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Jebamoth*, 45.

<sup>3</sup> *Issure Biah*, c. 43, quoted by Lightfoot; also the treatises *Avadim* and *Mikvaoth*.



affirmation of the hope of Israel. It was as a new birth to them. They were told the humbling lesson that they as well as the heathen needed purification. The Sanhedrist as well as the publican, the Pharisee and Essene as well as the harlot and the foreign mercenary, were alike bidden to prepare the way of the Lord by repentance and by baptism. The master in Israel was taught that he needed the ablution of the "heathen dog." Nicodemus might have learned from the older prophets his need of spiritual regeneration, but he fell over a lower stumbling-block.

The custom of the Essenes, previously referred to,<sup>1</sup> of terminating a year of probation before admission into their confraternity by "the holy water of purification," may throw some light upon the demand which John made upon the eager multitudes who thronged around him.<sup>2</sup>

The *Sabeans*, as their name implies,<sup>3</sup> were *Baptists*, and were so called by reason of their frequent ablutions, and M. Renan supposes that the *Elchesaites*, of whom we have received such curious details in the *Philosophoumena*, are little else than the old Sabeans, whose views had been modified by contact with the teachings of the *Avesta*.

We undoubtedly find that the followers of the supposed ELCHESAI and the believers in his revelation imagined themselves cleansed, by faith and baptism,

<sup>1</sup> Josephus, *B. J.* ii. 8. 7.

<sup>2</sup> The author of the *Philosophoumena* confirms the statement of Josephus in lib. ix. c. 18, where, speaking of the novice among the Essenes, he says, "He approaches more nearly to the sect's method of living, and he is washed more purely than before." Works of Hippolytus, *Ante-Nic. Lib.* vol. i. 355; Dr. Ginsburg, *Essenes*, p. 45, quotes *Jer. Demai*, ii. 3; *Bab. Becharoth*, xxx. 6, for similar lustral rites on admission to the Pharisaic order.

<sup>3</sup> Chwolson, *Die Sabier*, i. 107-144; Renan, *Histoire des Langues Sémitiques*, iii. 2.



from the foulest sins of the flesh and of the mind. The repetition of baptism is enjoined on the most fearful offenders, and the promise given, "If you are desirous of being converted, that your sins may be forgiven you, as soon as ever you hearken to this book, and be baptized a second time along with your garments, peace shall be yours, and your portion be with the just."<sup>1</sup> From the frequent enumeration of these formulæ, it would appear that the baptismal rite was repeatedly administered with the same intent. The author of this record refers to the Pythagorean origin of the various strange opinions entertained by the Elchesaites, and it is not a little remarkable that, together with a confused doctrine of metempsychosis and other resemblances to the Pythagorean system, there should have been also blended the practice of water ablutions as an *opus operatum*, by which, in great crises of existence, all the consequences of sin could be washed away.

Now our Lord very forcibly implied that the "baptism of John"—evidently meaning by that term the entire prophetic teaching and mission of John—was "from heaven," rather than "of men;" that John was divinely guided in his choice of this method of expressing his thought and urging his appeal on the conscience. This is, however, perfectly compatible with John's having selected a special institution, with which, in various ways, the popular mind had become familiar.

If John's baptism, either in mode or subject, was dependent upon proselyte baptism, grew out of it, or took any of its character or features from an orthodox Jewish rite or from a heathen ceremonial, it becomes

<sup>1</sup> Hippolytus, *A.-N. L.* vol. i. 347-349.



a question of profound interest, how closely Christian baptism is, in its turn, dependent upon John's baptism, or even related to it? It is difficult to steer clear of theologic and ecclesiastical bias in handling this historic question; yet it is perfectly obvious that John's baptism need not be regarded as destitute of Divine appointment, because it was the prophetic and inspired adoption of a symbol already familiar. *Mosheim* and others have supposed that John recognized the justice of a generally diffused expectation that the forerunner, as well as Messiah Himself, would administer a baptismal rite; and he thus explains the language of the Pharisees, "Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not the Christ, neither Elias, neither the prophet?" There is, however, nothing beyond this solitary passage upon which such an interpretation of John's conduct can be based.

The lustral rites of the Jews and of surrounding nations alike proclaimed a deep sense of corruption and impurity, and were all alike impressive anticipations of a cleansing process which should pass over not only the body, but the spirit of man. It is quite in harmony with the Old Testament position assumed by John, that he should have chosen this expressive symbol to deepen the sense of personal sin, and to excite the hope of redemption.

If he followed implicitly the form of *proselyte-baptism*, he must have performed the rite in secret, and have effected it by total immersion of the naked body; and he must have admitted children to the rite, and purified them, together with their parents, from the ceremonial defilement of their birth, and from all the disqualifications consequent upon national sin.



If, on the other hand, John took the *Essenic ritual* of admission into a sect, or society, as his model, it is improbable that any children were baptized by him. But we do not know, and cannot determine, the model that, under God's inspiration, guided his course; and we are inclined to believe that, alike as to matter and form, mode and subject, he struck out a path for himself. The moral effect of his preaching, the cry for help which answered his cry for repentance, the multitudes who thronged around him, and the eagerness with which they complied with his requirements, forced upon him certain modifications of the rite, and suddenly created an institution or ordinance for which no exact parallel had existed in previous times.<sup>1</sup>

The demand he made for repentance was eminently distasteful to Pharisees, who boasted of their righteousness, and to Essenes, who were glorying in their purity of soul and body. He did not in this demand go beyond the lines of the Old Testament law and prophecy. The ceremonies of the day of atonement, the bitter penitential psalms, the piercing confessions of national and personal sin made by Ezra, Nehemiah, and Daniel, and the rabbinical association of a general repentance with the coming of Messiah, all lent emphasis to this condition of baptism; but they did not serve to connect it organically either with the baptism of proselytes, the Pharisaic, or the ethnic ceremonial. Among them that were born of women, there had not risen a greater than John. Great as a priest, great as a Nazarene, great as a prophet, great as the Elijah—he was

<sup>1</sup> Keim, Bd. i. pp. 504-506, says the truth lies between the extreme views of Schneckenburger and E. C. Bengel, and points out the distinctions between the Jewish and Johannine baptisms in their method and spirit.



greater still as the creator of a new spiritual brotherhood, that was based upon moral conditions, and consecrated by an ordinance which represented to every subject of it the need of personal relationship with God.

Josephus, when speaking of

“John that is called the Baptist,” adds, “he was a good man, and he exhorted the Jews, by practising virtue, and by cultivating righteousness towards one another and piety towards God, to assemble for baptism, for thus the baptism would be acceptable (to God), when they made use of it, not for the remission (παραίτησις) of certain sins, but for the purification (ἀγνεία τοῦ σώματος) of the body, inasmuch as the soul had been previously purified by righteousness.”<sup>1</sup>

Josephus most imperfectly represents the doctrine of John, but he cannot be thrust aside as a witness to the impression produced by John's teaching on the educated and critical circles of Palestine. He must be held to represent the meaning which many of his class attributed to the water-baptism. According to his representation, John did not recommend the rite as a method of deliverance from the consequences of sin. He repudiated the idea that it would secure the remission of personal transgression. He assumed that the soul must be “previously purified by righteousness,” by “righteousness between man and man, and by piety towards God.” According to this statement, the baptism was acceptable to God when it was regarded as *not* possessing or conveying any spiritual energy, when it was sought for as a means of securing merely “sanctity of body,” *i.e.*, a physical and ceremonial purity.

On this showing, all that was of gravest importance in the mission of John was secured *before* the baptism, and not in it, or by it. The remission of sins, the

<sup>1</sup> *Antiq.* xviii. 7. 2. See the whole passage, *ante*, p. 53.



priestly absolution for venial offences, was not bestowed by John in the ordinance. The *soul* was to be previously purged by righteousness before the baptism was urged upon the disciple. It was no *opus operatum* by which a moral change could be effected, but one by which ceremonial defilement might be removed. It was a simple substitute for a wearisome round of lustrations and sacrifices, but it was a pledge that he who had sought this [*ἀγνεία*] purity of body was already bringing forth fruits meet for repentance. It thus amounted to a confession of sin, to an act of repentance, a mode of recognizing the great spiritual demands of the law of God; but in itself it was simply a ceremonial service, a divinely-appointed substitute for a burdensome load of religious rites which were beginning to crush and extinguish the moral life. If this were an accurate representation of the matter, John had not gone beyond the Old Testament platform, and moreover he had recognized the necessity of physical and ceremonial cleansing, which savours strongly of the Oriental conception of the evil inherent in the flesh of man. The baptismal rite, which only contemplates this "sanctity of body," is an end rather than a means of spiritual purification. The language of the Evangelists apparently contradicts the statement of Josephus. "John," say they, "did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins."<sup>1</sup> Great controversy has prevailed as to the conferring of grace and the remission of sins in the sacramental act of submitting to John's baptism. Ancient and modern expositors, Tertullian and Augustine, Lange and Meyer,

<sup>1</sup> Mark i. 4; Luke iii. 3. Cf. Lange and Meyer, *in loco*, and the admirable treatise of Matthies, *De Baptismo*, pp. 48-60.



sustained by a great consensus of opinion, see in this statement a reference to the remission of sin, granted not in the act of submitting to the baptism of John, but in the ultimate fulness of life bestowed in the baptism of Christ.<sup>1</sup> The explanation of the difficulty surely lies in the construction of the clause, *μετανοία εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν*. "Repentance unto the remission of sin." The relation between "repentance" and "forgiveness" is an idea pervading both the Old Testament and the New. It is the burden of the prophets, and the gist of Peter's forcible summons on the day of Pentecost. Repentance (including faith) is on man's part the indispensable condition of the Divine forgiveness. John proclaimed, with the voice of thunder, the need of repentance as a condition of the remission of sins, his baptism was the external symbol of the frame of mind with which the penitent approached the great forerunner. According to Josephus, he warned the people that baptism was *not* the means of securing the forgiveness of God. It secured other results, but not that. According to Mark and Luke, he encouraged confession of sin, but did not *give* either repentance or remission. His was a baptism of repentance and confession, ultimately leading to remission of sins. It was not a baptism of remission. John could not wash away sins. That cleansing from all unrighteousness for which he yearned, was to be effected by another baptism administered by other hands, not a baptism with water at all, but a baptism with fire and

<sup>1</sup> Tertull. *De Baptismo*, c. x. : "Nam quod prædicabat baptismum poenitentiae in remissionem delictorum in futuram remissionem enuntiatum est. Siquidem poenitentia antecedit, remissio subsequitur et hoc est viam præparare; qui autem præparat non idem ipse perficit, sed alii perficiendum procurat."



with the Holy Ghost. John knew that the call to repentance and to righteousness was not the same thing as the power to turn from sin; that the "generation of vipers" could not, by any baptismal rite, nor by anything short of Divine power, become the brood of doves. He might move the passions and stir the fears of the multitude, so that, as Josephus says, "they were eagerly ready to take his counsel" and accept his solemn warning. But John was not exalted to *give* them repentance or remission of sin. He could not put them right with God, nor cleanse the thoughts of their hearts. He did not wield the supernatural force. He did no miracle, phenomenal *or* sacramental; he could not create men anew. He was not the source of a new life in our humanity. Among all the prophets, none ever saw with such intense vividness as he the need of the Spirit-baptism. In commanding men to repent he found his impotence, and yearned for the great and notable day when the Spirit should be poured out from on high. His baptism was a lively picture and emblem of a nobler work than his. By urging repentance and righteousness, and teaching men to hope for remission of sins, he helped to create the need which none but the Son of God could supply.

A question here arises of considerable interest. Did the *water*-baptism of Christ and His apostles answer to this great need of humanity? Did this mighty travail of the old covenant end in the mere establishment of a lustration with, or in water, which was magical in its force, and to which the transcendent energies of the Spirit of God definitively attached themselves? Did John's preaching and baptism prepare the way for a spiritual dispensation, or mainly for the continuity of a



phenomenal and physical observance which should be charged arbitrarily with spiritual associations? Few more momentous questions have ever troubled the peace of Christendom.

The Fathers of the Church are almost unanimous in maintaining the essential difference between the *water-baptism* of John and of Christ. Unless this position be maintained, it is impossible to hold rationally any dogma of sacramental regeneration. The water-baptism of John was expressly and avowedly destitute of spiritual grace; it was simply a symbol of the gift of the Holy Ghost. Unless there be a very vital distinction between the water-baptism of John and that of Christ, the same thing must be said of water-baptism whenever and by whomsoever administered. Such a distinction is asserted by the Fathers and schoolmen, and is formulated in the decrees of the council of Trent, but it was left for the Tridentine Fathers to make an article of faith of the inefficacy of John's baptism.<sup>1</sup> The exegesis of the earliest writers does not exalt the sacrament of baptism to the lofty place in the theurgy of the Church which it subsequently acquired. Without entering here on the ecclesiastical doctrine of baptism, and the difficulty which the defenders of the so-called Catholic Church felt in dealing with the re-baptism practised by Donatists, in consequence of the re-baptism of John's disciples by St. Paul, it is important to observe that the baptism of John is contrasted with the baptism of Christ, not in the accompaniments of the ordinance of purification, but in its fundamental essence. John baptized with water unto

<sup>1</sup> Canon 1, *De Baptismo*. "*Si quis dixerit Baptismum Johannis habuisse eandem vim cum baptismo Christi, anathema sit.*" Cf. Chemnitzius, *Examen Concilii Tridentini*, Gen. 1641. pp. 230-233.



repentance, and preached the baptism of repentance unto the remission of sins ; but the Lord was mightier than he, in that He baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire. It is true that there is an allusion<sup>1</sup> to the distress of John's disciples at the fact that He to whom the forerunner had borne witness was baptizing, and that the whole nation was now transferring its religious enthusiasm to Him. The Lord, it seems, did not Himself baptize with water at all, He relegated this duty to His disciples, and we are told that they baptized more disciples than John, that the Pharisees were impressed by the fact, and that when the Lord knew that the Pharisees were taking notice of it, He left Judæa for Galilee.<sup>2</sup> What is very remarkable is that the fourth Evangelist never again mentions the subject of baptism, either in the Gospel, in his epistles, or in the Apocalypse. While, however, he is silent on the water-baptism, he is very explicit and abundant in his teaching concerning the gift of the Comforter, and the powers of the Spirit as exerted on the believer, on the apostles, and on the world.<sup>3</sup> The other Evangelists do not give a single instance of their Master baptizing any person with water. There is no proof that any one of the twelve apostles was ever baptized by Him, or by a fellow - apostle. The Lord spoke of a baptism<sup>4</sup> with which He had to be baptized, and told the two sons of Zebedee that they too should pass through the same consecration to their highest work,<sup>5</sup> but He made no reference to a water-baptism.

Still, the final commission of the risen Jesus<sup>6</sup> shows that our Lord commanded His apostles, in virtue of

<sup>1</sup> John iii. 26.<sup>2</sup> Ibid. iv. 1.<sup>3</sup> Ibid. vii. 39 ; xiv. 26 ; xvi. 7-13.<sup>4</sup> Luke xii. 50.<sup>5</sup> Mark x. 38.<sup>6</sup> Matt. xxviii. 18, 19.



His own authority in "heaven and earth," to "go and make disciples of all nations (by the twofold process), *baptizing* them into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and *teaching* them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world." In the doubtful appendix to Mark's Gospel, the commission stands thus: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be condemned."<sup>1</sup>

If these passages stood alone, they would be of little avail to prove the perpetuity of an ordinance which would seem to have originated with the forerunner, merely for a temporary purpose.

Luke, in his account of these closing scenes, speaks of the injunction to tarry at Jerusalem until the apostles were endued with power from on high; and the same discourse is either referred to once more, or was itself repeated and expanded in the opening verses of the Acts: "John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost, not many days hence."<sup>2</sup> This baptism Luke identifies with the miraculous gift of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. How many shared this glorious baptism we cannot say, but the probability is that *all* the disciples received from the risen Lord the mighty and supernatural influence which effected for their *spirit* that which water-baptism only professed to accomplish for the *body*.

The baptism of John was apparently the same in character with that which the apostles administered during our Lord's earthly ministry. Both baptisms

<sup>1</sup> Mark xvi. 15, 16.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Luke xxiv. 49 with Acts i. 5.



symbolized the cleansing of soul, the Divine refreshment, which the gift of the Holy Ghost would effect; not the origination of a new society merely, but the creation of a new humanity: but “the Holy Ghost was not yet given because Jesus was not yet glorified.”

At length the LORD was “lifted up,” to “draw all men unto him.” He was “exalted to show mercy, to give repentance and remission of sins.” At length He shed forth the Holy Spirit in such abundant measure on those who were communing with His Spirit, and delighting in His ascension, and continuing in prayer and supplication, that Peter declared, “*This is that which was spoken of by Joel the prophet.*”<sup>1</sup> . . . Repent and be baptized every one of you [ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι, not ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι, *in the name, i. e., in the power of Jesus Christ, but*] *unto the name, unto the full knowledge of the name or character and person of Jesus Christ, with a view to the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.* The three thousand who gladly received the WORD, *i. e., the proclamation of the power and kingdom of the Lord Jesus, were baptized, were enrolled in the new society, and received the Divine consecration.* Their repentance, the change of feeling and thought which was being wrought within them by the Holy Ghost—called regeneration or birth from above when viewed on the side of its Divine original—was not therefore communicated by the baptism with water, but by the very terms of the proposal was distinguished from it.

The special and extraordinary gift of the Holy Ghost, in the few instances in which it is expressly and pointedly described, was dissevered from the ordinance of

<sup>1</sup> Joel ii. 28.



baptism with water. Thus though the apostles themselves may have been baptized by the Lord, there is no proof of it. It would appear that John's baptism with water was regarded as quite sufficient in the case of several. The baptism of the apostles and others with fire and with the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost was entirely disconnected from any water-baptism whatever. Suddenly the Spirit came. They were assembled together "in one place," or "with one intent ;"<sup>1</sup> no hint is given of their baptizing one another. John had done that long since. The astounding spiritual elevation was not an accompaniment even of the initiatory rite. Again, when Philip went to Samaria, many believed and were baptized ; but the joy, the enthusiasm, the supernatural energies of the Holy Spirit, were reserved for a subsequent occasion, when the apostles laid their hands on them and invoked the Divine gift.<sup>2</sup> In like manner Peter's visit to Cornelius revealed once more the non-dependence upon any baptismal rite of the supernatural gifts of the Divine Spirit. The Gentiles were subsequently admitted into the Christian society by the ordinance of baptism, not in this instance even as a type, but rather as a sign and seal of their having already become possessed of the supernatural life and power.<sup>3</sup> This narrative corresponds very closely with the terms of John's baptism as described by Josephus. The baptism was not for the remission of sins, but for the purity and sanctification of the body, the removal of the birth stain, the ceremonial initiation into a higher stage of society, the identification of the Gentiles and Israelites as one body in Christ Jesus.

The only grave difficulty in identifying the essential

<sup>1</sup> Acts ii. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. viii. 5-17.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. x. 44-48.



principle of John's water-baptism with the water-baptism of the Christian Church, is the remarkable circumstance mentioned in Acts xix. 3, of the re-baptism at Ephesus of certain (about twelve) disciples who had been previously baptized (*εἰς τὸ Ἰωάννου βάπτισμα*) unto the baptism of John.

We feel that some of the methods used to override or solve this obvious difficulty are unsatisfactory. Surely there must have been some fundamental and appreciable distinction either in the significance, the manner, the formula, or the accompaniments of the two baptisms, for the Apostle Paul to have taken this course. It is perfectly conceivable that the baptism of John in this particular case represents not the preparatory and typical rite by which John was inaugurating a nobler era, and exciting the hope of a spiritual deliverance and renewal, but the prolongation of the supposed mission of John, after the withdrawal of the prophet himself and the accomplishment of his mission. That the believers in John's baptism should have been ignorant of the baptism by the Holy Spirit, as an accomplished fact, and of the moral change wrought in the tendencies of the soul and of society by His outpouring, proves that they must have lived in the isolated circle of thought dominated by John, and that they had never moved out of it. The continuance of baptism by John's disciples, AS SUCH, after the Holy Ghost had been given, the performance of a rite which ignored the fact of the Incarnation and of the Passion of Christ, which represented no consciousness of the Holy Spirit's work, was opposed to the baptism which Jesus had commanded as significant of His own work. The water-baptism of the prophet, up to the moment when the Holy Spirit



was poured out from on high, was equivalent to the water-baptism of Christ and of His disciples; but to have practised it afterwards, without its accompaniment of instruction, in ignorance of the form which Christ gave to it, was the quintessence of the Jewish spirit, which still clung to passover and pentecost, to circumcision and temple, to priesthood and sacrifice, after the ministration of condemnation had been done away.—I shall return to this question in a subsequent lecture.

Our Lord accepted and adopted the Johannine method of revealing the spiritual demands of the kingdom of God and the personal need of renovation, but He did not make it the means of communicating that new life; and though He adopted the water-baptism of John, yet it must not be forgotten that it was in John's function as a Baptist that our Lord placed him below the least of those who had entered the kingdom of God. It is neither to the priest nor to the ascetic, to the prophet nor to one more than a prophet, nay, nor is it to the BAPTIST, *as such*, that entrance is granted into the kingdom of God. The priestly functions, the ascetic habits, the prophetic order, the ceremonial and baptismal rites of Judaism, have all crept into the Church of the firstborn, have been confounded with the "*notes* of the true Church," and heralded as marks of the elect community; but they are *not* of its essence; they are neither indispensable to its progress nor essential to its vitality. "I thank God," said Paul, "I baptized none of you, save Crispus and Gaius, for Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel." The mission of John might be supposed to have been rendered permanent in the immense importance



attributed to baptism, and the awful emphasis laid by the sacerdotalist on the efficacy of that ordinance. It is in its administration that the door into the kingdom of heaven has been placed under the surveillance of the hierarchy, that a way has been made by the perversity of man for despiritualizing Christianity; yet the close observation of its origin shows how unimportant, how unessential, how Jewish, and even ethnic, is the fundamental conception of the rite as such. So far as it is a typical, symbolic, prophetic ceremony, suggesting or anticipating a higher kind of cleansing, and an association into an invisible and spiritual society, we rejoice in it still; but let us beware of cherishing any lower ideal than baptism with the Spirit, any less august administrator than the invisible but ever-present Lord.

It is not certain that John attached any special conditions to the administration of the rite. Still, we must regard the leading doctrines of his earlier teaching, on which we have already commented, as the positions tacitly accepted by the baptized. One point stands forth with singular clearness. The people came to the waters of baptism "confessing their sins;" and John's baptism was "the baptism of repentance unto the remission of sins." But his baptism was not the method by which "repentance" was generated, or by which "remission of sins" was guaranteed. If he could have accomplished these results, he would have dispensed with the higher baptism of the Spirit. Doubtless in his day, as in later times, the symbol was often confounded with the reality, the sign with the thing signified. But such a possible misconception of his drift did not induce him to pause; he encouraged confession of sin in the waters of baptism. The ac-



ceptance of the rite at his hands was a tacit recognition of the inefficacy of the entire dispensation to meet all the requirements of the awakened nation, or to soothe the perturbations and fears of despairing men.

“He spake to the people that they should believe on him who was coming after him.”<sup>1</sup> The great theme of his preaching was “the mighty one,” “the coming one,” the great King; the dispensation of spiritual force, change, life, and fire. He quickened the hope of the nation. The prophetic fervour of the Hebrew people, the eager anticipation which had so often blazed up into patriotic and religious enthusiasm, was not to be a perpetual illusion. John was not the Christ, but was sent to bear witness to His near approach. The baptism with water was an admission of the paramount claims, the severe judgment, the great deliverance, the final victories of One who was mightier than John.

To what extent the remission of sins was associated with the work of “the coming one” did not appear in the earlier ministry of John, nor indeed until he came into contact with the Christ. Remission of sin was conditioned by repentance and works meet for repentance. Whatever produced repentance unto righteousness was, *ipso facto*, the subjective occasion of remission. There were, however, other questions to answer, over and above the subjective relations between repentance and remission. They were such as these: How can repentance itself be originated? What is the Divine and objective ground of repentance? What is involved in the purposes and government of God by the taking away of sin? Repentance and remission of sins are indissolubly connected in Hebrew and in Christian

<sup>1</sup> Acts xix. 4.



faith. In some way they represent the common-place of all religious experience, but each term of this synthesis represents a plane of *Divine* operation as well as a fact of human experience. "Repentance," though an act of the human will, involves the spiritual Force which recreates the depraved disposition, and renews the image of God. "Remission of sins," though a blessed human experience, rests on the redemptive principles of Divine government, on the deep purposes of God, and on the whole principle by which, from the foundation of the world, He has blended judgment with mercy.

The two great factors of this simple human experience, "repent, and you shall be forgiven," are severally dependent on nothing less than those two great operations of the Godhead which we speak of as the work of the Son and of the Spirit. John, before his closer intimacy with Jesus, recognized each plane of Divine operation, *i. e.*, he proclaimed the baptism with the Holy Ghost and the Baptizer with the Holy Ghost, whose judgments on sin would be terrible, discriminating, and fiery. How the remission could be effected, he did not yet dare to utter; on what terms, in what way it would be accomplished, was as yet partially hidden from him. He knew much more of judgment than of mercy, of the avenger of sin than of the great propitiation, of the spirit of burning than of the spirit of grace. We owe a debt of obligation to him for the light that subsequently dawned on him, and through him upon the world.

Meanwhile the BAPTISM OF JOHN is necessary for minds in a certain stage of development. It is imperative to proclaim law and commandment to those who



have no self-control, who are victims of self-love, inventing every species of excuse for personal indulgence, and who, absorbed in self-complacent worldliness, sceptical and supercilious, frivolous and undevout, adopt every practicable palliative for conscience. Such must be brought into contact with the terrible aspects of the moral law. Such souls must be *convinced* that God is in earnest when He condemns and threatens with His wrath all selfishness, unspirituality, and distrust of Himself. They need the terrors of a judgment always coming nearer to them, of a quenchless fire for all chaff, a consuming flame for all the base alloy of religious profession. They must be "called to repent," as though the whole responsibility rested on themselves; and whether they see difficulties in the way of repentance, or obstacles in the way of remission of sin, or not; with or without further explanation, "God *does* command *all* men everywhere to *repent*." More than this, they may be confidently assured of pardon on the ground of a repentance which proves itself to be genuine by "works meet for repentance." Nay, even more than this, they may, by sacramental, external service, be comforted and strengthened. They may thus feel the power of a public pledge. The Essene's white robe was the mark of his initiation, the soldier's sword is a token of his loyalty, the marriage ring is the witness of conjugal faithfulness; so the baptismal water, as the symbol of discovered and acknowledged sin, may still be the confession of need, and may give expression to the hope of remission, and of the bestowment of some yet higher grace. But it is only in a very secondary sense that *this* is Christianity. It is Christian only in the sense



in which the belief in one God is Christian. It is not specific to Christianity. It does not constitute its essence. It is the element of Judaism, perhaps still too conspicuous in the Christian Church. It is the dispensation of John, not that of the true LIGHT OF THE WORLD. It is the Johannine element of Christianity, not one of the essential features of the teaching, life, grace of the Son of God. Among them that are born of women—prophets, poets, teachers—there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist; nevertheless, he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he. The whole *sacramental* theory places itself under this category, together with the sacerdotal and ascetic systems, which, as we have tried to show, received such illustration and exposition in the mission and the work of John.

What then is there in the sacramental system current in Christianity which, being rooted in truth and in human nature, legitimately belongs to it? One of the first efforts of a regenerated man is to seek the fellowship of those who have been “born from above.” The common sympathy of sensitiveness to the invisible things of the kingdom of God creates the first nucleus of a religious society. Faith is deepened by the sense of brotherhood. Community of interest to a large extent takes the place of logical proof. Whatsoever promotes the assurance of inward agreement in that transcendental region of religious experience, where scientific method cannot travel, acquires value from the sway thus exercised over the whole man. Thus the new spirit given to the individual and to the community will soon, by various aids and appliances, create the body and fashion an appropriate organization for itself.



It is, on the one hand, true that *spirit* can outlive *body*, and being immortal, may take on itself new forms, and look complacently on the ashes of its former self. It is, on the other hand, lamentable that the tendency of "body" to triumph over "spirit," and to claim a reasonable supremacy, leads many to say to their fellow-men, "Unless you become part of this body to which we belong, you cannot share the gift of the Creative Spirit." Nevertheless, grievous as this perversion is, it is none the less true that the healthy and legitimate sustenance of the body, and the recognition of its place in the economy of grace, are parts of Christianity.

There are those on the one hand who have pushed the *body*-development of Christianity to an extreme, who have perfected the system of its appeal to man by every avenue open to his inner life. Thus the physical and material element of his nature is by sacramental means constituted the starting-place for spiritual change. The continual manipulation of the physical man by the hands of the "priest" is made essential to his growth in grace. His physical functions are called into play even to digest the substance of the body and blood of the Lord Jesus. The hand and breath of one ecclesiastic is made to convey to another the power to perform invisible and undemonstrable prodigies. The union of man and woman cannot rightly engender the seed of the Church unless the priest sacramentally blend the two by a transcendental method. Holy oil consecrated by priestly hands is essential to convey and certify to a dying man the grace that he needs in his hour of extremity.

The system of the supremacy of the body is far more comprehensive than this. It deals with the entire



form that human faith should take in the alembic of the understanding. It will not allow a man to think out for himself his dogmatic belief, but it even thinks for him, reduces to propositional form the deepest mysteries of grace, and demands unconditional and implicit assent. If the moral nature protest against the process, it is gravely reduced to submission by a ponderous system of casuistry, which determines all the lines of good and evil to all eternity, and allows the conscience and the intellect to be active only within certain rigidly-defined grooves of change. The spontaneity of emotion and the fulness of the heart are regulated by authority. Days, times, seasons, hours, are enjoined for special emotions, which in a very wonderful way succeed in creating the semblance and often the reality of deep religious experiences.

There is however another extreme which is scarcely less energetic, and which moreover has upon its side much of the protest of outraged individualism, and much of the spirit of modern science. This not only refuses to accept the idea of any Christian sacrament as necessary or desirable for the reception of Divine grace, but withdraws into a proud and sometimes angry isolation ; cares not and seeks not for sympathy. Hence it repudiates all dogma whatsoever, casts off every form in which the ideas that rest on the supernatural can be intelligibly stated or logically urged. The inspiration of one man, according to this principle, can neither evoke the inspiration of another, nor satisfy his intellectual cravings. The true mystic must be alone. He cannot find a brother. The sacred day, or hour, is an abomination to him. Every day is more than Sabbath while he rests in God ; every place where for a while



his spirit dwells, is holier than the most hallowed shrine. No priest can help him to pray, no saint can comfort his lonely spirit when it is passing into the silent land. He will tear up all creed and disdain all auxiliaries to sympathetic emotion. His divine life is a sporadic, self-engrossing, unbrotherly growth, however fully it may satisfy his own spiritual nature.

The sacramentarian and the mystic are alike entrenched within lines where argument is valueless, and those who attempt to effect a compromise are visited with condemnation from both sides. Such is the fate of all who can see virtue in the conflicting forces of society, or eclectically combine the excellences visible in two opposing ranks. Christianity is eclectic, or rather syncretic, in this, that it makes its appeal to the whole of our nature, and not to one portion of it to the neglect of the rest. If the senses were the only inlet for truth, and if the physical element in man were the seat of his religious activity, then ritual either gorgeous or revolting would become the most fundamental element of the religious life. Into this the *cultus* of many forms of faith has irremediably sunk, and strong sacramentarianism scarcely rises above it.

When the sentimental and emotional element is exclusively recognized, apart from the voice of conscience, the imperative sway of the moral nature, and the regulative force of the intellect, there is no possibility for true brotherhood, and the pure mystic finds himself always in personal solitude.

If the rational and logical faculty be made the one touchstone of truth, then no deep, irrepressible emotion, no lofty intuition of things, *per se*, no sacred internal verification of truth by the approval of conscience



can stand, and the result is conspicuous in the hair-splitting of logical casuistry and the dreary dogmatism of many forms of speculative theology.

If the conscience, on the other hand, be treated as the sole Divine informant, then each man has to stand alone in this strange world to fight his battle with the spectres of fear and temptation, the princes of the power of the air.

If, once more, the higher spiritual intuition of faith be regarded as the only test of reality and truth, then the grace of God is limited to an ill-defined clique. This tendency has become conspicuous in many a Gnostic sect, in many a modern school of "sweetness and light," in the assumptions of the Ultramontanist and the delusive repose of the hyper-Calvinist.

Christianity makes its appeal to every one of these elements of our nature, and to all of them together. It does not sacrifice conscience to honour the intellect, nor does it crush the moral nature in the name of dogma. It does not trample upon the understanding in the power of authoritative revelation, nor undervalue science in the glories of its manifested love. It enlists the passions on the side of virtue, and enchains the heart with its reasons for obedience.

Further, while the religion of Christ never sacrifices either the intellectual, the moral, or the spiritual elements of humanity to the physical, never immolates the Church at the shrine of the priesthood, never crushes the individual conscience under the feet of the multitude, it is futile to deny that it does make an appeal through the SENSES to the intellect and the heart of man.

The body of man is the instrument by which his spirit receives its education. It is the shrine of the



spirit. Words, even the words of God, are but *sensuous* methods, physical means of conveying thoughts from mind to mind. Christianity moreover offers to redeem and consecrate the body, so that it may become the handmaid of the soul, the sanctified medium through which Divine ideas and holy images may pass into the spirit: it promises the resurrection of the body from the grave, and thus gives to the universe a pledge of its value. The incarnation of God, the signs of the descent of the Spirit, and the purification of the flesh by Divine grace, show how in God's sight the body itself is a sacred thing. A philosophy which has in the intensity of its spiritualism underrated the importance of the body, has generally run into dangerous and licentious excess.

Now what words are to thoughts, that also symbolic actions often are to feelings, and to certain forms of truth. Gestures, symbolism, and emblematic deeds often convey more truth, recall more history, awaken more emotion, and even more rapidly diffuse great ideas and purposes, than any mere form of words however admirably chosen. The wedding ring, the crown of a monarch, the flag of an army or a nation, the key of a city, the fiery cross, the clasp of the fingers, the lengthened kiss, the thousand courtesies and transactions of the market, the law court, and the home, convey ideas, communicate emotions, ratify covenants in a way for which mere words are practically impotent. Hence we conclude that Christianity will not dispense with or repudiate this element of our nature. There is therefore room in our faith for some sacramental and symbolic element.

We need not be surprised at the presence—even in



the spiritual religion of Christ—of a certain symbolic apparatus for suggesting spiritual thought, quickening religious experience, uttering inexpressible emotion, pledging wavering faith, and prophesying spiritual things. To this extent the Johannine revelation has been perpetuated. John seized hold of one of the simplest of all symbols, one sanctified in older faiths, and he taught Israel thus to confess their sin, their need, their faith, their fear and hope. Jesus, who sent forth the apostles, not to baptize but to preach the gospel, nevertheless bade them to make disciples of all nations—baptizing into the Eternal Name of Father, Son, and Spirit, and teaching them to observe all things whatsoever He commanded.

The baptismal ministry of John had a far more definite purpose than the awakening of the conscience of his hearers, the confirmation of a common fear of judgment, the creation of a vague hope of deliverance. He was a prophet and more than a prophet, and his own explicit declaration was, that he had come baptizing with water, with the express intention of discovering and introducing Messiah to the people. The grand peculiarity of his "baptism" was, that he assigned a personal centre to the development of the great crisis in the history of Israel.

It was not a vague something that was going to happen, as if by the simple unfolding of the ordinary laws of human affairs. It was not the fall of Rabbinism by the rush of some blinding storm of new belief, it was not the destruction of the visible theocracy by some more terrible display of Roman supremacy which might take away both place and nation. It was not the political outlook or crisis on which John commented, but



he prophesied of One mightier than himself, who would baptize not with water but with the Holy Spirit and fire. It was not a great captain of armies that he heralded, but a Giver of supernatural power and grace, who would have the faculty of discerning and dividing the people into chaff and grain, into dross and gold. Prophets they might have heard of; priests and kings, sages and saints, zealots and reformers they were acquainted with; but now there was One coming, One whose foot was already on their threshold, who would be and do infinitely more than all these. John's words without any twisting meant as much as this. "He may be a *man* to look at and speak to, but in preparing His way among you, I am sure that I am preparing the way of THE LORD!"

To what extent he did prepare the people for the Messiah whom he portrayed in terms like these, may be learned from the fact<sup>1</sup> that some of the most distinguished among our Lord's disciples had previously been in the school of John, and disclose in their subsequent career the influence of the whole class of thought to which he subjected them.<sup>2</sup>

But the effect was conspicuous at once, in the probable transference of the nucleus of his following to the influence and teaching of Jesus. The extent of his preparatory work may be partially judged from the extraordinary effect at once produced in Jerusalem by the presence of the Lord, by His sudden appearance in the twofold aspect, as One who smiled on the innocent joys of life, who manifested His glory at the wedding

<sup>1</sup> See Lutterbeck, *Die Neutestamentlichen Lehrbegriffe. Erster Band. Die Essenische Begriff, Die Spuren, in N.T.*

<sup>2</sup> To what extent John, James, and Apollos reflect the special *preparation* of John the Baptist, will come more appropriately into view in a subsequent lecture.



feast, and also at the same time vindicated the sanctity of the temple worship which He was about to consummate and to close. It is difficult to say to how great an extent the way of the Lord was prepared. Yet it is probable that an abrupt termination of our Lord's career was averted by the excitement which the Baptist's words produced among the people, and by the popular expectation of the coming and near approach of their Messiah.

This preparation of the people for their King was sufficiently diffused to leave a lasting impression upon them ; but it was not effected in the manner described by the synoptic Evangelists without exciting the jealousy and wrath of the hierarchy, and the grave and anxious suspicions of the secular powers. Our Lord spoke openly of the antipathy of the government to John and his baptism.<sup>1</sup> "They knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise also shall the Son of man suffer of them." These solemn words were confirmed by the implication that the chief priests and elders regarded "the baptism of John" as "of men," and not of Divine appointment, and by the fact that the "lawyers" rejected John and did not submit to his baptism or his message. These words of the Lord, coupled with the wide-spread belief in John's prophetic character cherished by Galileans, Jews, and Samaritans, show that, apart from the subsequent animosity of Herod and of his unlawful wife, John had to encounter serious persecutions. No public character of lofty aims and stern enthusiasm could stand between these conflicting waves of excited feeling without being buffeted by their angry shock.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xvii. 12, 13.



This antagonism and malice on the part of the authorities provide the explanation of the puzzling difference of statement as to the *scene* of John's baptismal work. The writer of the fourth Gospel has been accused of inaccuracy, of inventing after the lapse of years statements in harmony with preconceived notions of the relation of John to Jesus; of subverting and inverting the order of events, of ignorance as to the meaning of the terms "this side" and "the other side of Jordan,"<sup>1</sup> and of other offences against common sense and historic truth. In my opinion, the differences between the Synoptists and the fourth Gospel on this matter are full of instruction of another kind. The former represent John as in "the wilderness of Judæa," and on the banks of Jordan, there baptizing the multitudes who flocked to him from "Jerusalem and all Judæa, and all the neighbourhood of Jordan," and our Lord addresses the Galileans as having gone out into the wilderness to see the prophet; but the Synoptists close their account of the baptism with the administration of the rite to Jesus Himself. Luke however connects the baptism of John with Herod Antipas, and consequently implies that John had passed out of Judæa into some portion of Herod's dominions. Now it is after the baptism of Jesus that the author of the fourth Gospel commences his references to John, and his reminiscences of his testimony. It was not as the Elijah, not as the prophet of the wilderness, but as the herald and forerunner of Jesus, that the son of Zebedee remembered him, and he makes it evident that John was at the beginning of these testimonies "beyond Jordan," in

<sup>1</sup> Keim, *Geschichte Jesus von Nazara*, i. pp. 494, 523, ff.



Bethany of Peræa,<sup>1</sup> a place subsequently made remarkable by its being the retreat of Jesus before His last approach to Jerusalem,<sup>2</sup> and it is implied that it was from two to four days' march from the Bethany at the foot of the Mount of Olives.<sup>3</sup> It was this Bethany beyond Jordan to which, after the baptism of Jesus, the Pharisees came with their series of interrogatories. Consequently John must have left the fords of Jordan and secluded himself (as our Lord subsequently did) in this remote region from the angry and excited tumult of his followers and foes. The latter pursued him over the Jordan, and received there the memorable declaration which quickened their animosity and deepened their resolve to arrest his work. Even this was not the last movement of John. The Sanhedrim could trouble him in Peræa, he would be safer as he thought from their further interference in Samaria, and so we find<sup>4</sup> him six months later in the territories of Herod, still baptizing, and "not yet cast into prison." The reticences of Scripture are among its marvels. The reasons for these apparent discrepancies are often hidden from us, but in this instance they unroll a page of John's history which is full of significance. Like Elijah and all the goodly fellowship of the prophets, he bowed his head to the yoke, he did not fight the Sanhedrim or the secular power; he moved calmly on, still uttering his cry, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." "Repent ye, and believe the gospel." A great change passed over John when it became his solemn and awful function to discover and proclaim not only the approach of the kingdom, but the visible advent of its King.

<sup>1</sup> For the discussion of this *name*, see Lecture vi.      <sup>2</sup> Cf. John i. 28; x. 40.

<sup>3</sup> John xi. 11, 17.      <sup>4</sup> Ibid. iii. 23, 24. See discussion of the site, Lecture vi.



§ 2. *The Baptism of Jesus.*

The representations of Keim and Renan, that Jesus was attracted by the prophet of the wilderness, impressed by his originality, and overawed by his summons, and that He thus obtained His first lessons in the art of prophesying, took up John's message as his disciple, and pursued his method, seems to me strangely out of harmony with the whole representation of the four Gospels.

The statements of the Evangelists are not free from difficulties. In the fourth Gospel, John is represented as laying repeated emphasis on the fact, that until he received the sign of Jesus being the Baptizer with the Holy Ghost, he *knew Him not*; whereas according to Matthew's Gospel it is indubitable that he possessed sufficient knowledge of Jesus to say, "I have need to be baptized of thee."<sup>1</sup> The gravest perplexity has been allowed to gather round this apparent discrepancy.<sup>2</sup> Meyer

<sup>1</sup> Comp. Matt. iii. 14 with John i. 31, 33.

<sup>2</sup> Ammonius Presbyter in the *Catena Patrum* implies that though John was *συγγενής* to Jesus, yet his long residence in the desert had prevented his knowing Him. Chrysostom (Hom. xvi. in *Joannem*, and with him Euthymius and Theophylact agree) urged that though John, when he leaped in his mother's womb, knew Jesus to be the Christ, yet that he had not been familiar with His face and person. The instant that He made His appearance he learned, by Divine afflatus, that it was He whom he knew to have been born, and of whom he had prophesied; but the further testimony of the special sign was bestowed that the people might see that his testimony was confirmed from heaven, and was not due to personal relationship or familiarity. See Maldonatus on Matt. iii. 14. Epiphanius *adv. Hæreses xxx. Ebionæi Hær.* ed. cit. tom. i. 198, quotes a long passage from the Gospel of the Ebionites, which has been by some critics supposed to be an addition to the Gospel of Matthew. Justin Martyr possibly refers to it, *Dial. c. Tryph.* c. 88; Lücke, Usteri, Keim, and Bleek are disposed to accept it in some part as a genuine tradition. It represents the conversation which is given in Matthew as following, not preceding, the baptism. The passage is given in Epiphanius as a proof of the inaccuracies and perversions with which the document is filled, and it is quoted to prove this point by Jones, *The Canon of N. T.* i. 273. I translate the whole passage, which commences with a broad misstatement. "It came to pass in the days of Herod, the king



silently rejects Neander's suggestion, but it seems to me to meet the case as against various objectors. "In contradistinction to that which John now saw in the Divine light, all his previous knowledge appeared a non-knowledge." It does not require any great penetration to see that in the one case there is a simple narrative of a scene which Matthew or Andrew might have witnessed. The two great prophets meet; the one has come from His quiet home at Nazareth, and the other is in the full tide of his popularity. He knows of Jesus. This is the groundwork of the entire representation. There is One mightier than John, whose shoe-latchet he is not worthy to loose, and who is ready to commence His ministry. Whether the prophets knew each other personally or not, cannot affect the statement that John by Divine revelation, or by rapid intuition, should have gathered enough of the true character of Jesus to have made him hesitate to baptize the Saviour. He may have known and seen enough to induce him to cry, "I have need to be baptized of thee." Still, all

of Judæa, that John came baptizing with the baptism of repentance in the river Jordan: he was reported to be of the race of Aaron the priest, a son of Zacharias and Elizabeth, and all men went out to him. And it came to pass, after he had said many things, that when the people had been baptized JESUS came and was baptized by John, and as He came up from the water, the heavens opened, and He saw the Holy Spirit of God in the form of a dove descending and entering into Him. And a voice came from heaven saying, 'Thou art my beloved Son, in Thee I am well pleased,' and again, 'This day have I begotten Thee;' and immediately a great light illumined the place, which when he saw, John said to Him, 'Who art thou, Lord?' and again the voice from heaven said to him (John), 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I have been well pleased.' Then John, falling at His feet, said, 'I pray thee, Lord, do thou baptize me,' but He forbade him, saying, 'Suffer it, because thus it is fitting that all things should have been fulfilled.'" This representation, whether legendary or true, involves no contradiction of the utterance of John, as recorded in the fourth Gospel, "I knew him not." Strauss and De Wette insist on the contradiction between the two narratives, and declare that John's language given in Matthew is an unequivocal admission of the Messianic claims of Jesus. 'The sneer of the Wolfenbüttel fragmentist is too gross to be worthy of record.



this was as nothing to the blaze of light which burst upon his mind when he received the full assurance that Jesus was the Son of God. The "I knew him not" was a subsequent reflection of the Baptist, when the sublime humility, the dovelike sweetness, and the spiritual might of Jesus were revealed to him. A blind man who had received his sight during the hours of darkness might imagine, when the morning star first glinted through the lattice in the eye of dawn, that he knew the glorious meaning of light; but when the sun arose, bringing the day, he might with justice say, "I knew it not." There are degrees of vision, of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, sufficient to explain the first hesitation of John, and the burst of wonder when the heavens opened over him. The Apostle Paul, at the close of his career, wrote: "I count all things but loss . . . that I *may* know HIM;" and when the disciple who beheld His transfiguration and witnessed His agony, and had cried on the misty shores of Gennesareth, "It is the Lord," saw Him *as He is*, he "fell at his feet as dead." This is the disciple who reports the utterance of John the Baptist.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> While this work is passing through the press, I have seen Dr. Farrar's most interesting and instructive work on the *Life of Christ*, and venture to extract the following confirmation of the view expressed in the text. "When Jesus first came to the banks of the Jordan, the great forerunner, according to his own emphatic and twice-repeated testimony, 'knew him not.' And yet, though Jesus was not yet revealed as the Messiah to His great herald-prophet, there was something in His look, something in the sinless beauty of His ways, something in the solemn majesty of His aspect, which at once overawed and captivated the soul of John. To others he was the uncompromising prophet; kings he could confront with rebuke; Pharisees he could unmask with indignation; but before this Presence all his lofty bearing falls. As when some unknown dread checks the flight of the eagle, and makes him settle with hushed scream and drooping plumage on the ground, so before 'the royalty of inward happiness,' before the purity of sinless life, the wild prophet of the desert becomes like a submissive and timid child. The battle brunt which legionaries could not daunt, the lofty manhood before which hierarchies trem-



The motive of our Lord in seeking baptism from John, has from the earliest times been variously conceived by Christian writers. Thus Jerome<sup>1</sup> tells us that "in the Gospel which the Nazarenes use, there is the following narrative:—'The mother of the Lord and his brethren said to him, John the Baptist baptizes unto the remission of sins: let us go and be baptized by him. But he said to them, In what have I sinned, that I should go and be baptized by him? unless, by chance, this very thing which I have said is ignorance.'" Thus from early times a difficulty was felt in finding that the sinless One, the spotless Son of God, the miraculously conceived and sacred Type of humanity, should submit to a baptism which was practically a confession of sin.

Jerome, for himself, considered the baptism of Christ to have been the final cause of the baptism by John, as providing the ready means by which the forerunner would introduce the Christ to the multitude; that thus, moreover, authority would be given to the ministry of John, and that (as Augustine said) men would not henceforth hesitate to go to baptism of the Lord Himself, since He had not hesitated to submit to the baptism of His servant.<sup>2</sup>

The Roman Catholic commentators have generally recognized in the baptism of Christ by John a part of

bled and princes grew pale, resigns itself, submits, adores before a moral force, which is weak in every external attribute, and armed only in invisible mail. John bowed to the simple, stainless manhood, before he had been inspired to recognize the Divine commission. He earnestly tried to forbid the purpose of Jesus. He who had received the confessions of all others now reverently and humbly makes his own."—Vol. i. p. 117.

<sup>1</sup> *Adv. Pelagian.* Lib. iii.

<sup>2</sup> Maldonatus, *in loco*. See Appendix, for the manner in which Hippolytus refers to the event.



His work of supererogation, which prepared the way for the might, majesty, and supernatural powers of the rite of Christian baptism. Even Calvin<sup>1</sup> said: "The general cause why Christ was baptized was that He might perform obedience unto His Father; and the special cause was, that He might, in His own body, consecrate baptism, that it might be common to us with Him." Zwingli took the same view.<sup>2</sup> Strauss<sup>3</sup> says truly that the difficulty of our Lord submitting to the baptism of repentance was felt in the early Church; and he not only quotes the apocryphal passage from the Gospel according to the Hebrews, so variously described by Jerome, but he makes use also of a fragment preserved in an anonymous writer of a *Tractatus de non iterando baptismo*, generally found in Cyprian's works, to the effect that it was stated in an apocryphal book called the "Preaching of Paul" that Christ made a confession of His own sins at His baptism.<sup>4</sup> However, the writer of the tract introduces the passage in utter disgust at the document, not because he was feeling the pressure of difficulty on this score, but because some heretics had argued from the

<sup>1</sup> *Harmony of Gospels, in loco.*

<sup>2</sup> Referring to the great word of John, he says: "*Nescius mysterii quod Christus hic indicat hoc dicit nempe nostrum baptismum ex baptismo Christi sanctificari. Baptismus ergo (he adds) Christi quem per apostolos dedit et baptismus Joannis idem sunt.*" The righteousness that he was anxious to fulfil in Zwingli's view was the ordinance of God, by which "*qui me recipiunt et in me baptizantur, agnoscant me fratrem et consortem quum idem symbolum cum illis gesserint.*" Zwinglii, *Opera*, vol. vi. p. 243. Cf. Grotius, *Comm. ad Matt.* iii. 15. *Neque efficacius ostendi potuit quantus honor institutis a Deo ritibus deberetur, quam si Christus Ipse usum eorum nobis exemplo suo commendaret.* Osiander to the same effect; Witsius, l. c. §§lxiii.-lxv.

<sup>3</sup> *Life of Jesus.* E. T. i. 353.

<sup>4</sup> "In quo libro contra omnes scripturas et de peccato proprio confitentem invenies Christum, qui solus omnino nihil deliquit et ad accipiendum Joannis baptismum pæne invitum à matre sua Mariâ esse compulsus."—See *Ante-Nic. Lib.* Cyprian's Works, vol. ii. 426.



reference, in the same passage, to fire which appeared in Jordan at our Lord's baptism, that a perfect baptism was one which demanded fire as well as water for its consummation.

Strauss discovers in the scene, as recorded by Matthew, either a hint of the non-compliance of Jesus with the conditions of baptism as laid down by John, or an admission that our Lord had not thought of His own Messiahship before His baptism, and had not, by any consciousness of personal sinlessness, conceived of His case as free from the necessities of repentance. He says that the only light which modern theologians have thrown upon the problem consists "in the distinction drawn between what a man is as an individual, and what he is as a member of the community. He needed, say they, no repentance on His own behalf, but aware of its necessity for all other men, the children of Abraham not excepted, He wished to demonstrate His approval of an institute which confirmed this truth, and hence He submitted to it."<sup>1</sup> Strauss gives no authority for this view of modern theologians; but we are not surprised that he should endeavour, on this showing, to convince of dissimulation the Christ of Matthew. Strauss bids us take "a nearer view of the facts," and his method of doing so is to find irrationality or inconsistency in the conversation between John and Jesus, and to reject the historical validity of the narrative. We are disposed to urge, on the other hand, that the very method in which John addressed our Lord implies that he saw the chasm between Him and all other candidates for baptism, in the matter of repentance; and it may have

<sup>1</sup> *L. c.* E. T. vol. i. 354.



been further conditioned by his knowledge of the sanctity and mystery of His birth. We urge moreover, that in our Lord's reply there is a deeper reason expressed for His own baptism than John had, up to this moment, conceived, and it is one which vindicates for him a thoroughly unique consciousness. Ullmann<sup>1</sup> deduces, from the reticence of Jesus on this occasion, and the reason He gives to quiet the scruple of John, a testimony to His sinlessness from His own lips. It is sufficient to show that this language of our Lord is perfectly consistent with the idea of His nature which is the presupposition of the four Gospels, and that the interview between these two, as well as the transaction that followed, gave its highest meaning to the baptism of John, and virtually consummated it. (a) One condition implied in the baptism of John was faith in the coming of Messiah. The consciousness (or supposed self-consciousness) of Messiahship by our Lord was regarded by Strauss as incompatible with the reception of an ordinance which implied faith in the *ἐρχόμενος*. To my mind, it is precisely the reverse. The multitudes were baptized by John, affirming thereby their belief "in one who should come after him." Such faith, in every instance, was faith on the testimony of John, in his prophetic word, in the conclusion that he drew from the burden of Old Testament prophecy. In every instance it must have been imperfect in form, confused in outline, and encumbered by misconception. The only individual who came to the baptism clearly informed, with a faith of years, with an entire and unwavering conviction, was the Lord Jesus Himself. What could express the "*righteousness*," both

<sup>1</sup> *Sinlessness of Jesus*. Eng. Trans. p. 70.



towards God and man, of such a confession, more forcibly than the willingness of the Messiah to submit to the rite? He was the Christ, and because He was Christ and He knew it,—because He held with the most triumphant confidence the hope of His country and of the world—He said: “Baptize me too; let me, as son of Abraham—in the way in which the righteousness of God has ordained it—thus proclaim my invincible faith in the reality of that which you are calling upon all Israel to believe.” The highest faith is a perfect knowledge. As He said shortly afterwards to Nicodemus, “We speak that we know, and testify that which we have seen.”

(b) Another condition of John's baptism was “faith in the presence, or the nearness of the kingdom of God.” It required a lively exercise of faith to believe in the kingdom of God at that moment of political depression and disappointed hope. The imagination of the people was quickened by the dark background of judgment on which John painted the form and work of the great King. The first appearance of Him who might, to John's rapt vision, bear the royal signature of heaven upon Him, would awaken the scruple, “I have need to be baptized of thee. I believe *thou* art THE KING. Baptize *me* into this faith, Oh, possible Messiah.” But without waiving a claim, or denying the imputation, Jesus said: “*Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.*” “Thus will the great conviction that God has sent you be most entirely justified. It is fitting that I, who am the King, should thus say to Israel that I have come.” The whole kingdom of God was in a true sense contained in Him. He was the kingdom. All



its splendours, terrors, judgments and mercies were concentrated in Him. All the vengeance on those who are worthless and treacherous subjects; all the laws and all the grace of the kingdom, were waiting for Israel in Him. It is true He needed no *μετάνοια*, no thorough change of thought and mind on the nature of the kingdom. It occasioned no moral shock for Him to believe in the gospel of the kingdom. It was the richest conviction of His understanding, growing with His growth, expanding and deepening in the maturity of His manhood. If so, there was exceeding propriety (*εὐπρέπεια*) in His thus filling full the outline of the righteousness involved in this faith. A great multitude had crossed, in the waters of baptism, a Rubicon which divided the region of dim expectation from that of a vivid faith. They now believed that their King was coming to claim His throne and sway His sceptre. In the baptism of Jesus by John, the King Himself removed all doubt from the minds of the open-eyed, and brought in the everlasting righteousness by giving expression, in the appointed way, to the deepest conviction of His human consciousness.<sup>1</sup>

(c) The chief difficulty lies in the confession of sin, which it is presumed was involved in submitting to the baptism of John. It would be presumptuous to say that the remarks already made remove the difficulty; but it may be asked whether it was necessary for all the

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Farrar says: "He received the rite as ratifying the mission of the great forerunner, and He also received it as the beautiful symbol of moral purification, and the humble inauguration of a ministry which came not to destroy the law but to fulfil. His own words obviate all possibility of misconception. He does not say, 'I must,' but 'Thus it becometh us.' He does not say, 'I have need to be baptized,' nor does He say, 'Thou hast *no* need to be baptized of me;' but He says, 'Suffer it to be so now.' This is indeed but the baptism of repentance, yet it may serve to prefigure the 'laver of regeneration.'"—L. c. vol. i. pp. 116, 117.



conditions of baptism to be demanded in every instance, whether the righteousness was not fulfilled in His most perfect embodiment of the faith which it had been John's aim to excite in Israel? But let the following points be taken into consideration:—(1) The purification, the circumcision, the Passover feasts, the synagogue worship, were all of them confessions of impurity, of need, or of sin, for the people at large. Our Lord is represented as a "Son of the law," as being attentive to the demands of the law, as paying temple tribute, though conscious of His freedom from the impost. The baptism of John was one of the Divine appointments for the devout Jews; it was part of the preparatory plan—was an element of the righteousness of the law, to which He was superior by nature, but to which He had submitted for man's sake, without consciousness of personal defilement or need. He who maintained that He *was* a temple, nay, the true temple of God, and that service done to Him was equivalent to a temple service, yet on two distinct occasions dignified, honoured, and cleansed the national temple, and vindicated the minute rules which were believed to express and preserve its sanctity.<sup>1</sup> This baptismal door by which the "first citizen" of the kingdom was admitted into the full confession of its glories, involved for Him no more consciousness of personal defilement than did the temple worship or the Passover meal. Thus it was (*πρέπον*) fitting that He

<sup>1</sup> "Uti Christus circumcisis fuit, quamvis labis omnis quæ præputium cordis vocatur, expers, ut cerimonia defungeretur quæ Deum auctorem habuit, quæque omnes eos institutionis suæ majestate obstrinxit qui œconomia legali censebantur; sic et baptizari ipsum a Johanne oportuit, quamvis nullius ablutionis indigus, ne quidquam eorum omitteret quæ in dispensatione quæ Evangelium proxime antecessit, Deum auctorem habuere." — Witsius, l. c. § lxxv.



should fulfil all righteousness.<sup>1</sup> Still, those who have so strenuously opposed either the sinlessness of Jesus, or the authenticity of our narrative, urge the special significance of the confession of sin involved in this personal act, and say that "either the one or the other of these positions must be relinquished." Let us then consider the difficulty more closely, and observe:—

(2) It was the faith of St. Matthew that when Jesus healed all that were sick, He was fulfilling the anticipation of Esaias the prophet, who said, "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses."<sup>2</sup> Matthew also records<sup>3</sup> the sublime words that "the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." Paul tells us that "he who knew no sin was made sin for us;"<sup>4</sup> and Peter, that "he bare our sins in his own body."<sup>5</sup> Therefore, though the New Testament writers are never weary of expounding Christ's perfection, His innocence, His Divine excellences, yet they admit, nay, they urge, that He stood in close and intimate relations with our humanity, that He was "made of a woman, made under the law,"<sup>6</sup> that He "was made a curse for us."<sup>7</sup> The hypothesis of the Incarnation of God involves the supposition that a Divine-humanity came into living, agonizing, personal, real conflict with sin—that His person was "tempted in all points like as we are." If this were the case, His submission to this ordinance of "confession" was a part of that unutterable humiliation by which He brought in and fulfilled the eternal righteousness. He

<sup>1</sup> De Pressensé says : " In the Mosaic institution defilement was not confined to the defiled person, contact with such a one rendered purification necessary. Here we have not only contact with a fallen race, but most absolute union with it."—*Life of Christ*, E. T. p. 252.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. viii. 17.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid xx. 28.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Cor. v. 21.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Pet. ii. 24.

<sup>6</sup> Gal. iv. 4.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid iii. 13.



who bore our sins on Calvary, confessed their guilt and shame in the Jordan. Just as the gleaming forth of supernal majesty through the cloud of calumny and curse, forced from the Roman centurion the cry, "Truly this was the Son of God,"<sup>1</sup> so the depth of condescension involved in this identification of the King with His subjects, led the Baptist to "*see and bear record* that this was the Son of God," and "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world."<sup>2</sup>

Confession of sin could not, need not mean in His case the remembrance and disclosure of a corrupt nature, or the acknowledgment of base motives and unworthy deeds. He who was on the point of submitting to a fierce temptation to sin, who was, by His assumption of humanity, made to feel in His human nature the apparent advantage to the cause He had at heart, of resistance to the will of God, presented the practical solution of a problem which it is impossible, with all our striving, to reduce to logical form. "He *was* in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." "He suffered, being tempted."<sup>3</sup>

"Oh, holy God, yet frail weak man,  
'Tis not for us to know  
How spotless soul and body felt  
Temptation, pain, and woe."

Yet the problem is always provoking our effort, and exciting our curiosity. There is involved in its very terms the old puzzle which springs from the ratio between the absolute and the relative, the infinite and the finite. The hope of our logical understanding is that we may express the ratio in finite and in known quantities, and it is one which is perpetually doomed

<sup>1</sup> Mark xv. 39.<sup>2</sup> John i. 29.<sup>3</sup> Heb. iii. 18 ; iv. 13.



to disappointment. If we let go the perfect humanity of Jesus; or if we relinquish the Deity of the Son of God; if we imagine two beings commingled, instead of one Being possessed of this double consciousness; if we try any metaphysical exposition of the mystery such as was invented by Arian, or Nestorian, or Monophysite, we shall lose one or other of the great factors involved in effecting our redemption. We prefer to fall back upon the earliest faith about Christ our LORD, one which has to the present hour triumphed over the variously attempted metaphysical solutions of an insoluble problem; and we hold to His true humanity, His perfect Deity, and His one personality, believing that while the reconciliation of the inevitable contradiction of such a synthesis is *logically* impossible, it is apprehended continually in the depths of spiritual experience. Modern critics—such as “the clergyman of the Church of England” who submitted Canon Liddon’s “Lectures on the Divinity of our Lord” to such keen dissection—endeavour to convict the Catholic doctrine of inconsequence, and appear to exult over the difficulty to which its advocates may be reduced by compelling them to find the whole of their theory in every action or word of the Master. Such critics seem to forget that the so-called dogma of the Person of Christ is only a compendious method of stating *all* the facts. These facts are of two different kinds, and the *hypothesis* of Catholic verity does *not attempt to solve the problem or explain the mystery: it broadly states it*. The spiritual nature of man has found ineffable satisfaction in the *statement* of the elements of its faith. It may be pronounced transcendental, or extra-scientific, or beyond the limits of verification, or inconstruable to exact



thought ; but it would be well to remember that the fundamental logical difficulties of the synthesis are not a shade greater than they were, and *were seen to be* in the homes of Euclid and Aristotle eighteen hundred years ago, and that the history of all religious thought is one long yearning after a realization of a perfect union between God and man, such as we find presented to our faith in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

To return to the specific point which now presents itself—the “confession of sin” on the part of the sinless, impeccable Son of man. Could this be a real transaction? Must it not, by the very nature of the case, be a contradiction in terms? Is it construable to thought? I reply—that it is as thinkable as the temptation, or the acknowledgment of ignorance and of limited power, or the subordination of thought and will to the Father; that it is more comprehensible than the agony in the garden or the cry of despair from the cross. Different considerations may be brought forward in each case to reduce or modify the difficulty, but they do not remove it. The Lord took our humanity upon Him. The Son of God felt through human flesh and creature-limitation and temptations to sin, all the curse, the darkness, the perplexities, the humiliation of our fallen race. He was not and could not be conscious of personal corruption or defilement, but He must have felt in a degree in which no other person ever did or could have done, the burden, the curse, the peril, and the shame of SIN; not of His own sins, but of the sins of the world, the sins of the theocratic kingdom, the sins of those whom the Father had given Him, and of the nature which in infinite condescension He



had assumed. The Lord had laid upon Him, even upon His beloved Son, the iniquities of us all. If the heir to a great empire, out of the love he bore to his future subjects, were to sell himself into slavery, that he might understand the horrors of the mine, the starvation of the poor, the degradation and hideous repulsiveness of the dregs of society; if he should herd with the vilest, partake of their clothing, their ignoble pastime, their coarse food; if he should become the witness of their grovelling desires, their rebellious uprisings, their bitter rage and hatred for the government which he was soon to wield, he might be "a type" of Him who was in all points tempted like as we are, though without sin. If discovery of the extent of their own degradation and peril were the beginning of a nobler life for them, and if this magnanimous and spotless king intended to reward such discovery by a grand emancipation of his besotted serfs, how should the work be more nobly inaugurated than by his own confession—from the depths of his new experience—of the sins and degradation which he had taken upon himself, that he might bear them away. Faint type, I admit, but not without its bearing on the case before us. None could know like the incarnate God what sin was; none but He has fathomed the need of human nature. He alone estimated fully the regeneration which He declared essential to the formation of His kingdom. If so, who can rival the Lord Christ in confessing the sins of the world?

I am far from agreeing with the speculation of Macleod Campbell, that the agonizing sympathy of the Son of God with the sorrows and sins of humanity either constituted the adequate repentance for human sin, or



was the essence of His atoning work, or the ground of forgiveness on the part of the great Lawgiver. This hypothesis, framed to avoid the idea of the penal nature of our Lord's sufferings, involves the essence of a penal infliction. If sin and suffering caused Him so much sympathetic agony, it must have done so in virtue of the *law* of the supreme Governor of the universe, a law which has linked sin to suffering by bonds which, though often strained, are never broken. The empire of law certainly embraces the phenomena of sympathy, and the working of the law is but the continual expression of the will of God; so that if He merely took upon Himself the sufferings of an intense grief over human sin, He was in fact taking upon Himself the penalty which is the very essence of death, a punishment inflicted by the moral and physical constitution of man. The hypothesis does not accomplish the purpose for which in the main it has been framed. It will be said that there is great difference between the grief and vicarious penitence of a holy child over the evil condition of his brethren, and the infliction of unmerited stripes upon the innocent sufferer, instead of allowing them to fall upon the guilty. There is a great difference, but it is not at all more easy to apprehend when the Holy One, as in this instance, is the SON OF GOD. If the repentance be supposed of such a kind as to expound the agony of Gethsemane and of the cross, as well as the language of the apostles with reference to the Passion of Christ, it presents a greater difficulty to thought. It involves the consciousness of personal defilement, the sense of the actual sins of the human race, as transferred rather than imputed to the holy Sufferer, and the vicariousness of the sacrifice makes a



more severe demand upon our conscience and intelligence than the scriptural statement that He gave Himself as a "ransom," "was made a curse," was "set forth as a propitiation," and "bore our sins in his own body on the tree."

Now it does not appear to me that the confession of SIN by the Lord Jesus is adequate, *per se*, to explain the entire Gospel history, or the teaching of the New Testament, or the craving of the soul and conscience. But though we may refuse to admit that it constitutes the entire pith and essence of the atoning work, it must yet be reverently pondered. It would be altogether wrong to pass by such tremendous anticipations of Gethsemane as may be found in the baptism by John or in the temptation of the devil. There was such a coming up of the sin of the world into His pure consciousness, that the Lord was often "sore amazed and very heavy;" that He groaned in spirit and wept; that He could look with anger on the hard hearts that surrounded Him, and that He knew, as no other could have known, how much human nature required renewal into His own image, how urgently it needed forgiveness and redemption.

There were moments when we can see from the narrative that He suffered, being tempted, when the whole mystery of iniquity came near to His holy soul, and compelled expression. Short of this personal acquaintance with our humanity, the Incarnation cannot be thought of as complete. Independently of it, the penalty which He voluntarily underwent is inconceivable, and without its due antecedents in His consciousness. The conversation therefore between our Lord and the Baptist, as detailed by Matthew, was not



in the least inconsistent with the great theological induction as to the Person of our Lord, nor does it possess any unhistorical element.

§ 3. *The Accompaniments of the Baptism of Jesus.*

Keim discusses with the utmost freedom the probable truth of the description of the baptism of Jesus, given in Matthew's Gospel, and hazards the statement that the fourth Gospel knows nothing of the baptism of Jesus. He gathers from the knowledge subsequently displayed by our Lord with respect to John and his disciples, and from the accurate references made by Jesus to the character of John's influence over the people, that long before Christ's open appearance on the banks of the Jordan He had been studying the position of the Baptist and communing with him, and that this would account for John's hesitation in administering the ordinance. But Keim argues that Jesus submitted to baptism, not in order to remove His own conscious impurities, nor to confess the sins of humanity or of the people, nor as an inauguration to his Messiahship—a purpose which was thoroughly alien to the spirit of the baptism—but in fulfilment of a personal vow of consecration to the establishment and proclamation of the kingdom of God.<sup>1</sup>

Keim draws out the different forms of the narrative of the baptism, as given by the first three Gospels, and the expansion of the details in the later tradition as preserved in the Ebionite Gospel, in Justin Martyr, in Celsus, and the "Preaching of Paul." The differences turn chiefly on the moment of the opening of the

<sup>1</sup> Keim, l. c. i. pp. 523-533, where he agrees with Schleiermacher, Hase, Schenkel, and Weizsacker.



heaven, the direction taken by the descending dove, whether it was "into," "down upon," or "continuously abiding" on Jesus. He dilates on the slight discrepancies in the reports of the words spoken from heaven, and on the improbability that God should speak in audible words, which simply blend the language of Isaiah and the Psalms. He shows that it is difficult to obtain a consistent account from the four narratives, as to whether the voice was heard or the vision seen by the people, by Jesus, or by John only. He concludes that it is far more probable that later Jewish scribes should have portrayed in this pictorial fashion some of the relations instituted between John and Jesus at His baptism, than that objective facts like these should have occurred.<sup>1</sup> He is less destructive in his criticism than Baur or Strauss, and sets himself to extract from the narrative, as a whole, what was the impression about Jesus which passed into the mind of John.

It seems to me, that if we take the whole of the narrative into account, the verisimilitude of the transaction is less difficult to grasp. One Evangelist explains, and does not invalidate or contradict another.<sup>2</sup> John declares himself to have been specially prepared by Divine illumination for the accompaniment of the baptism of Jesus. He expected to discover the "mighty one," stronger than himself, by some sign that should convince him that the Baptizer with the Holy Ghost had at length made His appearance in the theocratic

<sup>1</sup> Keim, l. c. 533-550.

<sup>2</sup> The learned and diffuse treatise of Danzius, *Inauguratio Christi ad docendum haud obscurior Mosaica*, edited by Meuschen; *Nov. Test. e Talmude illustratum*, pp. 306-486, is an argument of extraordinary elaboration to show to the Jews that the portents of Sinai and all the investiture of Moses were exceeded when our Lord received the voice from heaven. He strives with earnestness to demonstrate the publicity and objectivity of the entire scene.



kingdom. Every other characteristic of Messiah was of less importance to John than the power of communicating the Holy Spirit. If the sign should be given that would convince him of the reality of this advent, if an objective proof of this sublime distinction being the official appanage of one of the sons of men should indeed occur, he distinctly affirmed (as related in John's Gospel) that he should feel his own work practically completed. To assist in the manifestation of such a messenger of the Lord of hosts, was the final cause of his mission. "In order that he might be manifested to Israel, for this cause (said he) came I baptizing with (in the) water." The non-appearance of this sign as yet was sufficient reason for him to hold his peace. He *knew*, but yet *knew him* NOT, until the fulfilment of the prediction. "He that sent me to baptize (in) with water, he indeed said to me, 'Upon whomsoever thou mayest see the Spirit descending and abiding, this is he who baptizeth with (in) the Holy Spirit.'"<sup>1</sup> Here of course we are ushered into the region of the supernatural. Here we encounter the stiffest antagonism of the rationalist, the materialist, and the mythicist. But let it be observed that we are thus admitted by one of John's disciples to the confidence of John. There was an experience of the Baptist which had preceded for days, weeks, or months, the actual occurrence to which it pointed. Special preparation was made within him for that which was about to happen under his eyes. He knew the fact about which he had to be satisfied before the imposing evidence of it was granted to him. It is easy to ask what possible proof could be given to one man of an event so transcendent as the descent from

<sup>1</sup> John i. 31, 33.



heaven, and the continuous abiding upon another, of the Holy Spirit of God? How could so sublime a consciousness have arisen? How could so recondite an expectation have been awakened? Is it an historical fact that John said this thing? If he said it, what was the true explanation of the strange intuition? Are we to believe that these words represent a real transaction, at least in the consciousness of John, and that therefore they approximate a definite truth, which adds to our conception of what a divine revelation is? or are we to suppose that John was wise after the event, and without conscious fraud thus interpreted the strange events of the baptism of Jesus? Or shall we say, with Strauss and Keim, that the whole narrative is the mythical colouring which the reverence of a later age unconsciously ascribed to the Baptist and the Christ, representing the ideas of the second century, but nothing more? We have many hypotheses to choose from. So far as the last is concerned, we conceive that the entire argument by which the authenticity of the fourth Gospel is confirmed is too strong to be undermined.

In this instance the fourth Evangelist does not invent a new objective fact, but, contrary to the ordinary operation of the myth-evolving faculty, rather diminishes than augments the miraculous element. The tradition had been widely diffused in the synoptic narrative, and in an exaggerated form had taken fast hold of the popular mind. The new element is one which has a tendency to explain the mystery, to make it more clear than the synoptic Gospels had left it, that the mind of the Baptist was the chief region of the miracle. The presence of the supernatural element in both cycles of tradition makes it clear that the author of the fourth



Gospel did not create this glorification of the incarnate God with the view of establishing the main position of his narrative, that "the Word was made flesh, and we beheld his glory, the glory of the only-begotten of the Father." The testimony borne by the Baptist to the Son of God was already well known, and must have formed a prominent part of the Palestinian preaching of the apostles. It was selected by the author in preference to the "transfiguration," although Peter, *John*, and James were declared in the synoptic narrative to have been witnesses of that august event. It is difficult therefore to believe that the author of the Gospel was doing other than choosing, from the abundant material at his disposal, that on which he would place the greatest dependence. He may have preferred to mention that, which though of a similar kind to his own experience, came with the authority of his revered Master. When Peter, James, and John were on the Mount of Transfiguration, they were favoured with a common, consentaneous revelation of the transcendent dignity of Christ, for which they were *unprepared* and which they only partially understood. Here was a revelation of the nature of the Christ for which the Baptist declared that he *was* prepared, and which at once confirmed his eager and prophetic hope. He expected some sign, some event, some vision, that should convince him that He who would baptize with the Holy Ghost was ready to commence His ministry of force and fire.

The key to the synoptic narrative is to be found in the statement of the fourth Evangelist. The Baptist there describes what he had expected, and he speaks of a Divine voice which had been addressed to him, preparing him for the vision; and, moreover,



he does not discriminate between the method of the first communication and that of the second. The entire criticism of this passage which occurs in both "Lives of Jesus" by Strauss, proceeds upon the impossibility of supposing that the Evangelists meant to describe anything else or less than a series of objective miraculous acts. Now it is true that the language of Luke is peculiarly explicit. We are told by Luke "that it came to pass when all the people were baptized, and Jesus himself was being baptized, and praying, that the heaven was opened, and that the Holy Spirit in a bodily form as a dove descended upon him (ἐπ' αὐτόν), and there was a voice from heaven, Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I have been well pleased."<sup>1</sup> Strauss maintains that the less explicit language of Matthew and Mark must be interpreted by the more explicit language of Luke, rather than the reverse, and consequently presses the position that the synoptic narrative involves great portents taking place in the sight of all the people, therefore the objective bodily appearance of the dove, and the literal opening of the heaven, whatever that may be supposed to mean.

Now, from the earliest times, from the commentaries of Origen to those of the present day, a great catena of judgment may be found in favour of such an exegesis of Matthew's account as materially alters this impression. We are told by Matthew (if it be reasonable<sup>2</sup> to believe that ὁ Ἰωάννης is the subject of εἶδεν), that John saw the opening of the heavens over Jesus, and that JOHN *saw* the Holy Spirit descending like a dove, coming upon *Him*, and that a voice from heaven,

<sup>1</sup> Luke iii. 21, 22.

<sup>2</sup> With De Wette, Bleek, Krabbe, Baur, Keim.



not addressed to the multitudes, but mainly intended for John himself, was heard by him, saying, “*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*”<sup>1</sup> If this were the only record, the conclusion might fairly be drawn that the entire occurrence consisted of a vision granted to a man whose eyes had been opened, to one who was the last and greatest of the prophets.

Thus Origen<sup>2</sup> distinctly denied that the physical descent of the Holy Spirit was an historical narrative, but regarded it as merely a spiritual vision.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, Mark and Luke undoubtedly speak of the occurrence as definite and objective. In Mark the εἶδεν and εἰς αὐτὸν are not unsusceptible of the same interpretation as that of Matthew’s account, but in Luke the form of the sentence refers, without doubt, to a physical fact, and the additional clause σωματικῶ εἶδει seems to compel a visible, tangible, material symbol of the Holy Spirit. If however examined more closely, the baptism of Jesus took place, not at a particular moment specially described, but, so far as Luke’s narrative is concerned, at some unspecified time during the whole period of John’s baptismal ministry, “when all the people were baptized.” Ἀπαντα τὸν λαὸν must refer to various classes and large populations, and consequently to many more than could possibly have been baptized on a single day.

<sup>1</sup> If Jesus is the subject of εἶδεν, the ἐπ’ αὐτὸν should have been ἐφ’ αὐτὸν. Winer, Bleek, but Meyer takes the opposite view.

<sup>2</sup> On John i. 32, and in *c. Celsum* i. 43-48: ταῦτα δὲ πάντα, τὸ κατελθεῖν λέγω ἐξ οὐρανοῦ τὸ πνεῦμα ἐπὶ τὸν Ἰησοῦν καὶ μῆναι ἐπ’ αὐτὸν, οἰκονομίας τρόπῳ γέγραπται οὐχ’ ἱστορικὴν διήγησιν ἔχοντα ἀλλὰ θεωρίαν νοητικὴν.

<sup>3</sup> So Theodore, in *Catena*, John i. 31, speaks of its being ὁπτασία οὐ φύσις. Jerome speaks to the same effect. Grotius, Neander (*Life of Christ*), De Wette, Bleek, in *Studien u. Kritiken*. 1833, § 2, 432, and his *Synoptische Erklärung der drei ersten Evangelien*, Bd. i. p. 173. De Pressensé, Olshausen, and others maintain the same view.



The whole clause must mean that the baptism of Jesus took place during the period of the baptism of the entire community, rather than in the presence of a crowd. The clause introducing the baptism of Jesus is brought in parenthetically, and is not the main point of the statement. Luke's description of what occurred, if we had no other authority, would suggest an objective circumstance; but since Matthew represents the whole occurrence in historical form from the standpoint of John's experience, and gives moreover the interesting details already referred to, it seems to me imperative to take Matthew and John as the true sources of information. The transaction is mentioned by Luke without implying such reference to the Baptist; *i. e.*, Luke has simply brought out into strong relief the experience of the Baptist, but without saying so. Strauss is keenly critical of Olshausen's "pneumatology, wherein are sensible realities transcending the senses, and he hastens out of this misty atmosphere into the clearer one of those who simply tell us that the appearance was an external incident, but one purely natural." Strauss in this case prefers the rationalistic interpretation of Paulus and Kuinoel to the spiritual representation of Olshausen, but without, of course, any acceptance of the lightning and thunder and dove, which were supposed by them to be the basis of the narrative.

No greater difficulty presents itself in this narrative than occurs in the numerous references to physical, audible, sensible manifestations, which are recorded in the prophecies of Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and the Apocalypse of St. John. There was *σωματικόν εἶδος* enough in the cherubim, the horses, armies, vials, and cities of



the Apocalypse. There were "voices" heard by Abraham, Moses, Elijah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and others, which correspond exactly with these marvellous events, and which might be and were sometimes described in the language of ordinary physical facts, but which no interpreter supposes to suggest in every case the physical vibration of air in the lone island, the wilderness, or the city, which expressed in some vernacular idiom of Hebrew or Greek the thoughts of the Almighty. There is no need to multiply physical miracles when we have to do with a mind like that of John's, to which the grand realities of the spirit-world had shaped themselves in abundant symbol and impressive hieroglyph. The consciousness of the Hebrew prophet or seer, the ear and eye of the man who enjoyed such commerce as he pursued with the spiritual and unseen world, must have been opened in a way that ordinary psychological phenomena cannot explain. He does not stand alone with these visions and voices from the eternity to which he and all his brethren belong. The prophetic eye and ear are not quite closed yet. There are intensely vivid intuitions still which transcend all demonstrative proofs, all inductions of science. If we believe that John saw and heard these things so far as his consciousness was concerned, and said so, it will be enough to account for all the peculiarities of the Gospel narratives. But if we make the hypothesis that such a *vision* was impossible, if our modern science has closed our eyes so completely that we cannot believe even in the unsealed faculties of the prophets of God, of course there are difficulties enough in the narrative and in the documents. On this supposition some mythical invention or manufacture, out of the second Psalm, after the fashion



of Strauss, may afford a little relief to our benumbed or blindfolded faculties. But why should not the great event of the descent of the Spirit upon the Christ have been perceived in the symbolic manner in which John said he saw it? What could be more expressive than the vision of the "opening of heaven,"<sup>1</sup> the "rending" or "dividing of the heavens," — corresponding to the promise of our Lord to Nathaniel that he should see "heaven opened," and akin to the dying glance of Stephen, to the "door opened in heaven" for the Apocalyptist, to the visions of Job, and Ezekiel, and Peter?<sup>2</sup> We are to remember that the "heavens" of Oriental thought and of traditional ideas are simply the symbol of the Eternal and His presence, they constitute the side on which we look out on the Infinite. When manifestations of God's presence were made, the prophets saw the Lord bowing and rending the heavens. Excessive light dazzled their eyes. That which they called His Shekinah or "tabernacle" overpowered their vision, they fell prostrate in awful reverence, and waited for the heavenly voice. Under these dread visitations from the living God, the apparent localization of Jehovah made them apprehend and feel His universal presence and august majesty. It would seem that this manifestation was the special sign of the nearness of God. It was His means of making Israel feel that He was their God. The appearance of the glory of the Lord<sup>3</sup> consecrated the tabernacle and the altar of burnt-offering, hallowed the temple, constituted

<sup>1</sup> Ἀνεψχθησαν αὐτῷ οἱ οὐρανοὶ, Matthew; εἶδεν σχιζομένους τοὺς οὐρανοὺς, according to Mark; ἀνεψχθῆναι τὸν οὐρανὸν, in Luke.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. iv. 1; Acts vii. 56; x. 11; Job xxxviii. 1; Isa. vi.; Ezek. i. 4-28; x. &c.

<sup>3</sup> Exod. xix. 9-25; xxiv. 9-18; xxxiv. 29; xl. 34; Lev. ix. 23, 24; Numb. vii. 89; Deut. xii.; 1 Kings viii. 10.



the sanctity of the holy place, justified the sacrificial rites, was the recognized symbol of the especial approach of Jehovah to their consciousness and heart. The Shekinah had long deserted Israel, the glory had departed, and now the Elijah of the New Covenant, who had declared the near approach of the "Lord of the temple," whose soul was filled with prophetic vision, who expected a baptism of fire, who may have even counted on the descent of fire from heaven to consume the foes of the kingdom and burn a pathway for the King of kings, saw the heavens cleft, and the light in which God Himself was clothed, descend from heaven. Justin Martyr<sup>1</sup> declares that "fire was kindled in the Jordan;" and the Gospel according to the Hebrews<sup>2</sup> adds, "Straightway a great light shone round about the place." These glosses on the original text of Matthew record the tradition of an impression produced upon the Hebrew prophet who discovered the Messiah, that the Divine majesty which once appeared in the wilderness, and sanctified the temple, had now at length officially consecrated a *sacred human personality*. In the depth of this strange humiliation of the possible Messiah, amid the dark mystery of His sympathy, as He rose from the water, having confessed the sin of the world and the faith of the new Israel, the prophet saw the long-lost Shekinah, "the glory of the Lord." The theological significance of this can hardly be overrated. It is not the only time that prophetic eyes were opened to the revelation that the Son of man was greater than the temple, was Lord of the Sabbath, was verily and indeed the beloved Son of the Father.

<sup>1</sup> *Dial. c. Tryph.* § 88. πῦρ ἀνήφθη ἐν τῷ Ἰορδάνῃ.

<sup>2</sup> In the passage already cited, *Ephraïm Hær.* xxx. 1. 138. καὶ εὐθὺς περιέλαμψε τὸν τόπον φῶς μέγα.



It is not said that all that was involved in this revelation, all the confirmations of it which the "transfiguration," which the vision of St. Paul, which the supreme majesty of the Christophanies of the Apocalypse supplied, had dawned upon the mind of John. He uttered his word, he gave his testimony, he has done much by it to create the belief in the Divinity of the Messiah, but *it does not follow* that he comprehended all its significance to us.

This Shekinah glory involved in the opening of the heavens is not the whole of John's vision. There was a specialty in its form and method of approach which we can gather best from Matthew's account, coupled with John's expectation as preserved by the fourth Evangelist. The Spirit of God revealed Himself, made Himself manifest in the opening heavens, but descended in "*bodily form like a dove*" upon the head of Jesus, and "*abode upon him.*" What John declared that he saw with those prophetic eyes of his was the dovelike form and motion assumed by the supernal light. Its outspread pinions were like the wings of the morning. A dazzling brightness above the splendour of the sun was drawing nearer with gentle librations of its wings. The Spirit which dovelike brooded over the darkness of chaos till it teemed with life, seemed to hover over Jesus. Nearer came the vision of life and peace and joy, and it rested on the Lord. That which John had been taught to expect, he now beheld, a mingling of awful majesty and sweet meekness, of Divine glory and human gentleness; a sanctity as of the temple, and a freedom as of the birds of heaven; a resistless force like the fiery steeds of the rising sun, and an infinite tenderness and inward peace like the calmness of a



brooding dove.<sup>1</sup> Nor was this all: the revelation he obtained of the nature of Messiah, as of the blending of wondrous opposites, was supplemented by the *abiding* upon Him of this combination of sweetness and severity. What must his prophetic vision have been? It was not like Peter's, one which was drawn back to heaven, but, according to his representation, it "abode upon him." The idea he suggests to us is not the bestowment of a spiritual energy which should blaze up into excitement and enthusiasm, and then subside into commonplace, or dissolve like Elijah's into craven fear, but the passing of the dovelike glory into Jesus. It vanished from John's sight *into* Him, and he heard a voice—akin to the voices which Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Peter, John, heard on other occasions—saying, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." What may have been the psychological antecedent of this vision and voice, what the philosophical explanation of the astonishing mental phenomena, we know not. We may easily throw a haze of uncertainty over some of the most noticeable facts of history, by reducing to the level of common experience all the strong thoughts of prophetic men which cannot be put into

<sup>1</sup> Keim, l. c. i. 539, finds the conception of the dove in the later speculations of Hebrew mind. "Wiederum nur den Juden und etwa den Samaritern war die Taube, dieser Lieblingsvogel Gottes und der Menschen, dieser Opfer-Vogel, der Noachische Heilsbote mit dem fruchtbaren Eiblatt, der Vogel des würdevollen Flugs, der glänzenden Flügel des sinnigen hellen Auges, des girrenden Geheimthuns und allermeist der reichen Naturkraft und Brüttekraft, das Sinnbild des heiligen Geistes oder gar des Messias, indem die Lagerung des Geistes über den Wassern der Schöpfung, auch die Weisheit Salomo's von den Rabbinen in Tauben-gestalt abgebildet wurde." This is very brilliant, but why should it not apply to the psychological preparation of John's own mind to receive the vision. On the subsequent and late use of the dove to represent the Holy Spirit, see Didron, *Iconographie Chrétienne*; Ciampini, *Vetera Monumenta*, pars. i. p. 235; Mrs. Jameson's *Life of our Lord*, i. 12, 78, 297; J. Radford Thomson, *Symbols of Christendom*, p. 55, ff.



the ordinary language of mental conviction, by comparing them with the hallucinations of madmen and the abnormal vagaries of diseased brain. There is a region of dread reality made known to us by researches into the mere phenomena of disease, but when we have fairly eliminated these, there is a vast mass of fact belonging to every literature and time, which shows that some select minds are far more open to the great underlying, all-surrounding world, than the bulk even of acute thinkers and careful observers. The whole phenomenon of Divine revelation comes within this category, and must be compared with those other facts of the moral consciousness, in order to see the roots and germs of the deepest convictions which have dominated mankind. In tracing a Divine revelation back to its source, we always, in every case, come to a *human consciousness*, a conviction of surprising force and intensity, which can take no other form than the cry, "Thus saith the Lord." It is difficult to say what were the objective facts which occurred—objective, *i. e.*, in the sense of being present not only to the consciousness of the prophet, but to the sense-impressions of others at the same time. It is enough if John saw what the shepherds of Bethlehem, what the favoured three on the Mount of Transfiguration, what St. Paul on the way to Damascus saw, viz., the Shekinah glory overshadowing the sacred form of the Son of man. If so, others if present may have been partial witnesses of the occurrence—just as they were on the occasion of St. Paul's conversion—without comprehending its full significance, its relation to the past history of Israel, or its testimony to the nature of the Lord. So in this case the significance, the articulate force of the manifestations reached expression



only through the *consciousness of John*. It is through the soul of the great artist-poet that the meaning of nature becomes obvious to whomsoever by sympathy, by word and symbol, he is able to communicate his thought or the movements of his inner life. The glory of the Lord, the sonship of Emmanuel, the fire and gentleness, the resistless energy and the quiet peace of the Holy Spirit, were manifested at this moment. The baptism was the epoch of the accession of sublime spiritual power to the humanity of Jesus. The Spirit descended upon Him, He received into His human consciousness a new spiritual force and energy, and by some symbolic act, some intense communication between those two, John became alive to it, and it shaped itself to his consciousness—Hebrew prophet that he was—as an opened heaven, a descending dove, a revealing voice.

Several theological difficulties here present themselves. (1) To some minds it seems impossible to conceive, on the part of John, a conviction of the Divine Sonship of the Lord Jesus, and of His official dedication to the Messianic and mediatorial office, so clear as this occurrence appears to involve. Many prefer to suppose that the entire narrative was fashioned out of the language of the second Psalm, by the reverence of a later age, or that it sprang from the desire of the second century to realize the Hebrew ideal of a Messiah as receiving Divine authorization, and demanding a universal homage from the kings of the earth as the Son of the Blessed.

My reply is, that the synoptic narrative is *more* expressive and explicit as to this faith in the sonship of Jesus, and the descent of the Spirit upon Him,



than the fourth Gospel is; that the earliest accounts are equally forcible in every part as to the fulness and completeness of the Divine claim. There is not a trace in Matthew, Mark, or Luke, of an inchoate or undeveloped plan on the part of Christ. The Synoptists reveal the idea of the Divine Sonship of Jesus as one of the earliest convictions of the sacred society of the hill country of Judæa, as one impressed upon the youthful mind of Jesus, as interwoven in the whole account of the baptism and temptation, of the visit to Nazareth, of the Sermon on the Mount, and of the first confession of Peter. Surely, taking the lowest possible ground, so original, creative, and penetrative a mind as that of Jesus could not, on any hypothesis, have had to wait until He was thirty years of age—pondering the Old Testament, and acquainting Himself with the mind of His countrymen, as He must have done—in order to become profoundly impressed with the grand fact of His Sonship, of His relation to the Father, of the spiritual requirements of His humanity for the great work which He set Himself to accomplish. Since some communications undoubtedly passed between John and Jesus, why should the conviction of John that Jesus was the beloved Son of the Father-God be brought into question? It would be better to frame our psychologic laws so as to embrace recorded facts which have exercised so potent a sway on the evolution of humanity, than to tear our most sacred records to pieces, in deference to the supposed discovery of those laws elsewhere.

(2) In estimating the relation of the mission of John to the kingdom of God, we must not ignore a serious theological difficulty which encumbers the foregoing



narrative. Both Matthew and Luke record the astonishing circumstance that our Lord was not the son of Joseph and Mary by natural generation. Matthew tells us<sup>1</sup> that the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take to thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost;" and that "she was found with child of the Holy Ghost." Luke is more definite in his language, and describes the angel as saying to Mary herself: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore, that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."<sup>2</sup> Strauss is rash enough to conclude from this circumstance that the idea of the descent of the Holy Spirit at the baptism of Jesus is so entirely inconsistent with the account of the miraculous conception by the Holy Spirit, that when the tradition of the baptism received its present shape, the legend of the Incarnation could not have been current; that the Divine origination of the humanity of Jesus renders any subsequent special communication of the Spirit unnecessary; and that since the two narratives are mutually incongruous, according to his usual destructive criticism, both must be rejected.

So far as Luke's Gospel is concerned, we have already<sup>3</sup> shown that there is no reason for doubting the integrity of the document, that the argument based on Marcion's Gospel proves too much, and merely demonstrates the mutilation effected by the early Gnostic. The suspicion touching the antiquity of the first two chapters of Matthew is without weight. The Gospel

<sup>1</sup> Matt. i. 20.<sup>2</sup> Luke i. 35.<sup>3</sup> See Lecture 2.



must stand or fall in its integrity. There is no doubt that these chapters were always integral portions of the *Greek Gospel*; and the earliest fathers—Irenæus, Clemens Alexandrinus, Justin Martyr, Hegesippus, as well as the early heretics—all attest their existence.<sup>1</sup> If the “Gospel according to the Hebrews,” of which fragments have been preserved, and which some would make the basis and origin of the Greek Gospel of Matthew, be an apostolic production, which we seriously question, then it is just possible that these chapters were not in that Gospel in its most original form; but the testimonies to the Greek Gospel of Matthew are numerous and cogent, even when we have eliminated all references to the Hebrew form of Matthew’s “preaching” and narrative.<sup>2</sup> The Evangelists explain the sinless perfection of the Divine humanity of Jesus by the circumstance that He was saved from the entail of corruption by the very manner of His introduction into our world, and both Evangelists speak of this event as effectuated by the Holy Spirit, as the great agent of the creative energy of God. It is not necessary to suppose that as yet the Hebrew mind adequately conceived the personality of the Holy Spirit; but Mary understood that the Spirit which brooded over the waters, which “renewed the face of the earth,” which “dwelt” in holy prophets and made them differ from ordinary men and women, which created a new and “clean spirit” in the bosom of the defiled and guilty, would be the sole cause of her

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Davidson’s recent *Introduction to the N. T.* vol. i. p. 492.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Alex. Roberts, *Discussions on the Gospels*, part 2. The mutilation of the Gospel of Matthew, in the recension of the Gospel of the Hebrews, is fully attested by Epiphanius and Jerome, and the fact of these mutilations shows that it was not likely a myth could have arisen on this subject in the face of such antipathy as that of both Ebionite and Marcionite.



maternity. That which throughout the New Testament is described as the causative and personal energy of the new life in man; as the Divine power which regenerates the soul, and brings the human being to think, feel, and act in harmony with the will of God; which is the Divine cause of all that is beautiful, fruitful, eternal, in the life of man and of society, is called "the Holy Spirit." The beginning of a new humanity in the womb of the Virgin is attributed directly to the same exalted and creative grace. "The holy thing to be born" of her was by the Holy Ghost. The whole Godhead concurs in the taking of humanity by the eternal Word, in the conference upon human nature of so Divine a function and dignity. The Son of God is born of the Virgin by the power of that Spirit which is the source of the new nature in every child of God.

The question arises, does this exclude the necessity of the special communication of the Spirit at the commencement of the Christ's official work as Messiah, Teacher, Sin-Bearer, and anointed King of the true theocracy? In other words, does the one statement render the other incredible? Does the latter narrative prove that when it was circulated the record of the Divine Incarnation could not have been current? In answer to this, we have to ask whether the production of the Divine Humanity, and the constitution of the person of Christ the Son of God, involved the full and complete equipment for His human duties? We think that it provided the condition of such a heavenly baptism, provided the sphere and region for the spiritual energies and the Divine glory to be manifested, but nothing more. The operation of the Holy Spirit seems, in the



first case, to be restricted to the production of the Divine humanity before the dawn of human consciousness. The Spirit of the Father and the Son did not here do more than fashion that Holy Thing; but a moment arrives in His history as a man when He is to confess the sin of human nature, when He is to declare the hope of the true theocracy, when He is to take upon Him the crown of all the earth. It is the solemn inauguration to His official work, the hour of His deep humiliation and kingly glory, when He needed consolation, when He required that there should come into His human consciousness the reality of His Messianic mission, and into His hands the sceptre and keys of the kingdom of God. What He Himself said to Nathaniel shortly afterwards may be the true explanation: "Thou shalt see heaven opened, and angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of man." This statement throws strong light upon the vision and conviction of John. Communications were ever going on between the Son of man and both the heaven of the Father and the home of the Spirit. There were *other* communications of spiritual energy to Him, which were made known to the disciples. Angels ministered to His humanity after the temptation and in the garden of Gethsemane. The Lord Himself spent whole nights in prayer, and as Luke tells us here, He was at this very moment "praying" for the spiritual illumination, energy, and control, when the answer came to Him, and the fact of the answer was revealed to the consciousness of John.

A parallel or two will show the baselessness of the objection of Strauss. It seems the very nature of the Spirit's operation to make varied approach to the souls



of men, and even thus to manifest Himself where there can be no question of the previous belief in His presence, operation, and indwelling. It was after the Lord had said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," that the day of Pentecost, with all its wonderful fulfilment of Christ's own promise, drew on. The views of the most extreme critic will hardly assign to the Acts of the Apostles, *on that ground*, a later date than to the fourth Gospel. St. Paul says that God, from his mother's womb, "separated him" (unto the apostleship); but it was long afterwards that God was pleased to reveal His Son in him. The entire history of the miraculous powers of the Holy Ghost, following upon the regeneration of the early believers, shows how possible it was for them to conceive that the incarnate Son of God should yet be set apart to His human official functions by a special display and communication of the power of the Holy Ghost. As those who are renewed and sanctified by the Spirit may yet again and again be "filled with the Spirit," so John the Baptist, because he knew the wondrous story of the birth of Jesus, was more ready to believe in the descent of the Spirit upon Him at His baptism. The argument of Strauss proves too much. The same principle would lead to the mutilation of a document in which, within a few pages, the story of the baptism is followed by that of the transfiguration. With equal justice it might be said that the scene at the baptism renders that of the transfiguration needless, and therefore that *its* circulation at a particular time was incredible!

It is possible for us even now to see the meaning and significance of this great consecration. It is true He "was born King of the Jews," but He was not



the crown prince of Israel in the estimation of men. He was the depositary of the word of the Lord, but Israel did not know it. Though He was the God-Man, He had certain national and dispensational *offices* to fill, for which He needed specific and functional introduction. The dignity of His person, and His essential glory, did not render either unnecessary or unmeaning the full preparation of His manhood for specific work. It is thus, moreover, that we learn some momentous lessons on the extent to which His incarnation, and the method of it, affected His consciousness as a man. It is perfectly certain that His human nature passed through its several stages, and that His mind submitted to the *successiveness* of thought. Every day added to the stores of His consciousness. The incarnation of God in Him could not have been a *human* consciousness from the first. His Divine-humanity may have all along needed the assurances of the Divine Fatherhood and the Eternal Love. He who had to go through the agonies of the temptation and the ignominy of the cross, may have needed the instruction, consolation, and stimulus of this great revelation.

(3) Theological difficulties are however aggravated by the speculation of certain modern critics that the author of the Fourth Gospel did not closely distinguish between the Word (*λόγος*) and the Spirit (*πνεῦμα*) in their relation to the personality of Jesus. Baur,<sup>1</sup> Schmidt, and Eichhorn<sup>2</sup> have urged that in the prologue to the Fourth Gospel the author used the former term to denote the Divine element in the complex personality of the incarnate God; that when he

<sup>1</sup> *Biblische Theologie des N. T.* ii. 268.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Lücke, *Comm. in Joan.* c. i.



began to speak more historically of the facts which came under the observation of others, and which presented themselves to the consciousness of the Baptist, he used the term *πνεῦμα*; and that after the reference to the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus at His baptism, the *λόγος* drops into the background, and is never again referred to. We admit that Justin Martyr<sup>1</sup> and Tatian<sup>2</sup> blend and confound the two words *λόγος* and *πνεῦμα*, though they are not guilty of this as expositors of John's Gospel. Nor can it be doubted that Philo, whose use of these terms differs in many respects so profoundly from St. John's,<sup>3</sup> represents them as co-existing powers of God, which mutually presuppose one another, and may be spoken of as identical. Philo, however, verges on allowing the *λόγος* to be the centre of the personality of God, and regards the *πνεῦμα* as the impersonal element of life in God and man. St. John has recorded our Lord's own description of the essence of the *πνεῦμα* as being allied in nature to invisible mind and cleansing water, and as directly opposed to the flesh. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." The Logos is the eternal source of all life, and it has been the Light which lighteth every man. He says further that this Logos has come into the world, having been made flesh. That statement is St. John's way of describing the Incarnation. If it were not so, the doctrine of the fourth Gospel would be that Jesus underwent, at the moment of His baptism, a second birth; but the author would not, with the prevailing thought and idea

<sup>1</sup> *Apol.* i. 33.

<sup>2</sup> *Oratio c. Græcos.* 7.

<sup>3</sup> Dorner, *History of the Doctrine of Person of Christ*, E. T. vol. i. pp. 19-30; De Pressensé, *Life of Christ*; Cæsar Morgan *On the Trinity of Plato and Philo-Judæus*; M. Nicolas, *Des Doctrines Religieuses des Juifs*, p. 178, ff.



of the *πνεῦμα*, have said of the *πνεῦμα* what he does say of the *λόγος* in John i. 14. The synoptic doctrine of the operations of the Spirit in the formation of the human life of Jesus was independent of any doctrine of the Logos, or of the new birth of man by the Spirit. St. John clearly regards the incarnation of the Logos as the condition of the abundant gift of the Holy Spirit to Jesus at His baptism, and of the continually abiding in measureless fulness upon Him of that same Spirit. It is because He is "from above, and above all," that "the Spirit is given to him without measure." It is because the Word was made flesh in Him that He was capable of receiving the Divine fulness of the Spirit. All the evidence furnished by the Evangelist of the Personality of the Son before and during His visible incarnation, are so many silent proofs that he *did* discriminate between the gift and descent of the Spirit at the baptism, and the fundamental constitution of the Divine person of the Christ by the incarnation of the Logos. Doubtless John in his prologue described, philosophically and dogmatically, what the Synoptists had described historically as the operation or conception by the Holy Spirit, the great agent in humanity of all Divine results.<sup>1</sup>

(4) The theosophic Gnostics, who maintained the unreality of the body of Christ,<sup>2</sup> also adopted a view to which Irenæus often refers, that "the *ÆON Soter*, or *Christ*, descended from the Pleroma into the Messiah of the Demiurgus, or into the seeming man Jesus, at

<sup>1</sup> Matt. i. 21; Luke i. 35. See Pearson, *The Creed*, art. vii.—"He was conceived by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary"—a discussion on which we need not enter; Lücke, *Excursus über das Verhältniss zwischen John i. 14 und 32*.

<sup>2</sup> See Tertullian, *De Carne Christi*, c. 6, and *adv. Marc.* iii. 11.



His baptism, and through Him announced the unknown God.”<sup>1</sup> Thus Irenæus,<sup>2</sup> in describing the opinions of the followers of Valentine, says: “There are some who maintain that the Demiurge also produced Christ as his own proper Son, but of an animal nature. This ‘Christ’ passed through Mary just as water flows through a tube, and upon Him there descended, in the form of a dove, at the time of His baptism, that “Saviour” who belonged to the *Pleroma*, and was formed by the combined efforts of all its inhabitants.” Irenæus refutes the theory,<sup>3</sup> for (after quoting Matt. iii. 16) he adds: “Christ did not at that time descend upon Jesus, neither was Christ *one* and Jesus *another*; but the Word of God, . . . who did take upon Him flesh, and was anointed by the Spirit from the Father, was made Jesus Christ.” This passage shows that, whether Justin confounded the Spirit and the Logos, or not, Irenæus discriminated between them. The Ebionite Gnostics who combined with the later followers of John the Baptist entertained many strange and bewildering speculations of their own, based more or less upon the grand persuasion to which the Baptist gave expression, viz., that the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus at His baptism.<sup>4</sup>

This utterance of John’s was the turning-point in his career, and constituted a momentous epoch in the history of religious thought. The Baptist saw the mystery of eternal love and power in Jesus, and the Christian Church owes to him some of her clearest intuitions of the Person, work, and glory of her Lord.

<sup>1</sup> Norton, *Genuineness of the Gospels*, ii. 270.

<sup>2</sup> *Contra Hæres.* lib. i. c. 7.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* lib. iii. c. 9.

<sup>4</sup> See further remarks on “The Disciples of John,” in Lecture vii., and Neander’s *Life of Christ*, E. T. § 42.



LECTURE VI.

*THE LATER*  
*MINISTRY AND SPECIAL REVELATIONS*  
*OF THE BAPTIST.*







## LECTURE VI.

### THE LATER MINISTRY AND SPECIAL REVELATIONS OF THE BAPTIST.

**I**F the fourth Gospel be authentic and trustworthy, there cannot be the shadow of doubt that John recognized Jesus as the Messiah. Josephus is silent on the subject of John's relations with Jesus. The Synoptists describe the Messianic anticipations of the Baptist, and the marvellous effect produced on his mind by the interview that took place between him and this great Candidate for his baptism. But they further detail the doubt that clouded the eye of his faith, and indicate the separate interests of the disciples of John and of Jesus. In consequence of these suggestions, modern criticism has thrown special suspicion upon the veracity of the famous testimonies we have now to consider. To say nothing of Strauss or Baur, or even of Keim or Renan, Neander, in his admirable remarks on these utterances, allows that they may have been coloured by the affectionate and religious memories of the disciple who was loved by both John and Jesus.<sup>1</sup> These testimonies

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Christ*, E. T. § 112. "He revered the memory of the Baptist, his spiritual guide; these words of the Baptist had greatly tended to develop his inner life, and had led him to Christ; it was therefore all the easier for him to attribute to them a higher Christian sense than the Baptist had when he



seem to me to provide the key to the synoptic narrative. If they are carefully pondered in the light of that narrative, they are seen to be in perfect harmony with it, and to prove their own verisimilitude by many undesigned touches of extraordinary significance. The first in importance is to the effect that Jesus is,—

§ 1. *The Son of God.*

According to Matthew and Luke, John after long pondering over the need of Israel and the hope of mankind, declared that the kingdom of God was at hand, that One mightier than himself was about to occupy its throne. He predicted judgment, scrutiny, and condemnation. His own function was only that of a herald's voice, crying, "Prepare the way of Jehovah in the wilderness." The true Prophet, the great Priest-King, will baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire. This strong, almost feverish expectation of his, meant something more definite, more positive, than the maxim that "No virtue is safe that is not enthusiastic."<sup>1</sup> He looked for supernatural changes in the structure of society. He anticipated the day of the curse upon all that do wickedly, and he hurled his thunderbolt into the very homes of the people and their priests. But now a great change has come over him. He has welcomed his kinsman; he has found himself awed into sudden and overwhelming reverence before Him. In obedience to His command, he has baptized the Man who would Himself baptize with the Holy Spirit. The Synoptists explain that which he uttered them. The interpretation which he gave to them may also have reacted upon the form in which they were impressed upon his memory. This view (he adds) does not in the least impugn the veracity of the narrative."

<sup>1</sup> *Ecce Homo*, p. 8.



fourth Gospel introduces with abrupt sententiousness. They tell us that a voice was heard from heaven proclaiming the Divine Sonship of Jesus. According to the fourth Gospel, John cried, "I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God." There is more than enough in the synoptic Gospels to show that the Jews had blended with the notion of Messiah his personal consciousness and revelation of this extraordinary relation to the living God. Peter reveals this conjunction of ideas in his own mind.<sup>1</sup> The power of Christ over nature wrings a similar exclamation from the witnesses of His miraculous energy.<sup>2</sup> The tempter and the demoniacs are represented as familiar with the idea.<sup>3</sup> The high priest at the trial, the mocking crowd about the cross, and the Roman centurion, make use of the same expression.<sup>4</sup> Nathaniel at the commencement, and Martha at the close of His ministry, are stated, in the fourth Gospel, to have given emphatic utterance to this deeply-seated association of dignities.<sup>5</sup> Our Lord is not represented as claiming this lofty designation with the frequency with which He adopted the more familiar title, "Son of man." Still, He does speak of Himself as in a special and peculiar sense "the Son," and "Son of God," and as having power to confer, in fellowship and union with Himself, a similar blessed relationship upon His disciples. This mode of speech, in our Lord's own lips, is discoverable chiefly, if not exclusively, in the fourth Gospel,<sup>6</sup> although it is tolerably clear that the prime intention of each Evangelist is, by a process more or less his own,

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xvi. 16, 17.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. xiv. 33.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. iv. ; Mark iii. 11 ; v. 7 ; Luke iv.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. xxvi. 63 ; xxvii. 40 ; Mark xiv. 61.

<sup>5</sup> John i. 50 ; xi. 27.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. iii. ; v. 19-23 ; vi. 40 ; x. 36.



to establish the same sublime position.<sup>1</sup> The term in John the Baptist's lips, from his thoroughly Old Testament standpoint, must have based itself upon the theocratic conception of Israel being God's Son,<sup>2</sup> and on the fervour with which the Davidic king might hope thus to enter into the fellowship of heaven.<sup>3</sup> We cannot attribute to the Sanhedrim or to the early disciples the full significance that the word subsequently acquired in the mind of the apostles or Evangelists. It became very soon the recognized formula of the faith, "I believe that Jesus is the Son of God." In that confession the metaphysical and the theological, as well as the national signification of the phrase, must have been triumphant over the world which resisted His claims. Those who believed that Jesus was the Son of God overcame the world.

Now, is the more restricted and historical use of the phrase all that we can positively attribute to John? We think not. He heard the voice, he knew the sign which lifted this kinsman of his not only to Messianic dignity, but into the circle of that apocalyptic thought of which we see the symptoms and the expression in the books of Daniel and Henoch. It does not appear that he was ever brought under the power of the later teachings of our Lord, or that he became an avowed disciple of Jesus; but he was dazzled with the mystery of this new life. He saw at a glance, that which all his previous study of sacred Scripture, of society around him, and of the depths of his own heart, had failed to teach him. He saw and

<sup>1</sup> See Reuss, *Théologie Chrétienne*, ii. chap. 8; Westcott's *Introduction to the Study of the Gospels*; Schmidt's *Bib. Theol. New Test.* E. T. part i. div. ii. § 22.

<sup>2</sup> Hos. xi. 1.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Sam. vii. 12-16; Psal. lxxxix. 20-28.



bare record, he left it as a great testimony, that this was the Son of God. To John the Baptist must therefore be attributed the high distinction of so far penetrating the dark mystery of things as to have been the first to discover this wondrous background and sublime secret underlying the outward life of Jesus. The subsequent confessions of Peter and Nathaniel, and of the awestruck witnesses of His mighty works, were anticipated, if not suggested, by the Baptist. The idea of the fatherly relation of God to *some* men, to distinguished kings, heroes, legislators, and patriots, was widely diffused among heathen nations. The supposition that unusual mental or physical endowment was the outcome of special organic relation with the gods needs no illustration. In Israel, the unity and supreme majesty of Jehovah, His awful purity and eternal glory, led to an intense desire after close personal relations with Him. All goodness, all power, all the eventualities of life and history, and national development, were attributed to Him; but the *Sonship* was reserved for a further revelation. Loyal service, subjection and devotion to Jehovah, constituted the ideal life of Israel; but a consciousness of filial affection and relation was held out as a prophetic picture of the future, rather than as an immediate experience. Many an Oriental mystic had imagined himself a part of the universal God, a wavelet on the boundless ocean of the All; had dreamed that the impersonal and eternal One had come into consciousness in his own transient individuality, and so described himself as a "son of God." But the Baptist did not speak of *himself* as "the Son of God" in this or indeed in any sense. It was given to him to discern, by the teaching of God's



own Spirit, that Jesus was "the Son of God." In no loose or indefinite sense did he persist in this conviction. This becomes evident if we follow the chronological order of his teachings, and the effect which they produced. John was baptizing at a place called Bethany, beyond Jordan.<sup>1</sup> This change of position is significant. It is not the place where the great crowds had gathered round him, where his words had made the multitudes tremble, and the advent of the King and of the judgment had been proclaimed with trumpet-voice.

<sup>1</sup> There can be little doubt that *ἐν βηθανίᾳ* is the true reading of John i. 28. It is the reading of  $\aleph^* A B C^* E F G H L M S V X \Gamma \Delta$ , and a large number of versions of both the Syriac, of the old Latin, Memph., Armenian, and others. The reading *βηθαβαρα* is avowedly a suggestion of Origen's (iv. 140). in a passage the whole of which is given by Tischendorf and other critics. Origen's reason for making the suggestion shows explicitly that the MS. he was accustomed to consult contained the reading "Bethany," but that it was too difficult for acceptance by him, because Bethany was fifteen stadia from Jerusalem, and was not on the other side of Jordan, and he could hear of no place of such name on the banks of the Jordan. Chrysostom (viii. 111) makes a similar remark. The MS. authority for another name differs in many ways. Thus it assumes the name of *βηθαβαρα*,  $C^2 K T U \Lambda \Pi$ , *βιθαβηρα* in cursive MS. 69. 262. *βηθα-ραβα* is used twice by Orig. iv. 140, also *βηθαρα*, and *βαθαρα*, Orig. iv. 280. The *Text. Recept.* adopted the *βηθαβαρα* of Origen. Tischendorf, Tregelles, Alford, Meyer, Griesbach, Scholz, and others concur in reverting to the original reading. There was probably such a place as Bethabara,  $\text{בֵּית־עַבְרָא}$ , "a house of ford," or "passing," *πέραν τοῦ Ἰορδάνου*. Such a place is referred to by the Greek Fathers, and is found in the *Onomasticon* of Eusebius. Dr. Alexander, Kitto's *Ency.*, suggests that it may have had just the same meaning as *βηθανια*,  $\text{בֵּית־יָרֵךְ}$ , "the house of a ship," or ferry. The Greek word would thus represent two Hebrew words, and having been used for both places for a time, subsequently gave way in common parlance for Bethabara. The fact that the additional clause *πέραν τ. Ἰορ.* is added to discriminate it from the Bethany that became so well known in the Evangelic history, is important, and shows that the suggestion of Hilgenfeld, that it was fabricated by the author of the fourth Gospel, in order that the ministry of Jesus might seem to have begun and closed at the same place, is quite untenable. The name of Bethany has not as yet been found lingering in the neighbourhood of the ford. Further, it is not improbable that Origen and Chrysostom confounded with it the *Beth-barah* mentioned in Judges. The LXX., however, reads *βαιθηρα*, as the scene of the slaughter of the Midianites, and made the correction from Bethany to avoid the topographical difficulty. Dean Stanley (*Sinai and Palestine*, p. 304) still thinks that Origen was probably right in making his correction, but his arguments do not seem conclusive or even strong.



The people had rapidly conjectured that John himself was the Messiah, and were ready to obey him as their master. But the ruling religious party, the political and social magnates, must have held a very different notion. The Pharisees, Sadducees, and lawyers derided him. In all probability they had begun to plot the overthrow of the dangerous prophet, and to do to him "whatsoever they listed." The baptism of Jesus had been followed by His immediate departure into the wilderness, and the opened heavens and the Shekinah glory were at once exchanged for the wild beasts of the desert and the temptations of the devil. For forty days He was lost to the view of John. Full of awful expectation, the Baptist and his disciples probably followed Jesus across the Jordan to the spot spoken of as Bethany; or John may have thought that beyond Jordan his prophetic mission would have been left undisturbed by the pragmatistical and treacherous advances of the Pharisaic party in the Sanhedrim. Even here the deputation of Pharisees and priests discovered him, and received the solemn and mysterious announcements which throw light on what John meant by "the Son of God."

It was to this Bethany that Jesus returned in all the power of the spiritual triumph He had gained over the tempter; and the author of the fourth Gospel records a great revelation now made by John the Baptist, as that of a man "sent from God" "to bear witness" to that Eternal Light which was "the life of men," and which had "come into the world." He, moreover, cites the words of John as the Baptist's confirmation of the declaration which he had himself just made, that the Logos had become flesh, and



manifested in human life the glory of the only begotten Son of God. We are told that he uttered the mighty saying with a loud cry,<sup>1</sup> as though the words were forced from him by some transcendent, prophetic, supernatural impulse. "This is He of whom I spake.<sup>2</sup> He that is coming after me has been assigned greater dignity than I, for He was anterior to me."

This was mysterious enough. The prophet here plunged his fathoming line into a deep ocean. He could not understand his own thought, or at all events comprehend its full bearing. Yet this was probably the key note which ultimately led to the composition of the prologue to the fourth Gospel. Standing on the Old Testament platform, John must have pondered the coming and the pre-existing glory of the Messenger of the Covenant. He was undoubtedly anticipating some apocalyptic vision, a sign of the great King in the clouds of heaven, a manifestation of Jehovah terrible and judicial. The baptism with the Holy Spirit was however, as he had just learned, to be administered by a man like himself, though he was One over whom the

<sup>1</sup> κέκραγε λέγων. De Wette says, "laut mit Nachdruck sprechen."

<sup>2</sup> οὗτός ἐστι ὑπὲρ οὗ ἐγὼ εἶπον implies an earlier utterance of the same fundamental truth. In fact, as Euthymius and Chrysostom by their interpretations imply, the words ἐμπροσθέν μου γέγονεν do but express more forcibly the ἰσχυροτέρος μου ἐστίν of Matt. iii. 11. See Genesis (LXX.) xlviii. 20. On that supposition the ὅτι πρῶτός μου ἦν is no tautological adjunct, but the reason and ground of the previous saying. His pre-existent glory in the bosom (not with Baumgarten-Crusius, in the counsels) of the Father, is the justification of his elevated rank, so greatly exceeding that of John. Luther, Kuinoel, Meyer, Mai, take the first clause as expressing the pre-existent glory of the Logos; but, as Tholuck has remarked, this reference of γέγονε to the constitution of the λόγος would be in harmony with the Arian interpretation of the created nature of the λόγος. The γέγονε seems to me to point to the dispensation of the Son of God on earth, the ἦν to the eternal glory of One who was in nature and in time πρότερος = πρῶτος, "before," John. Hengstenberg sees in πρῶτος the idea of absolute priority. See Lange on John i. 15.



heavens had opened and whom God approved. Must our modern canons of criticism exclude the belief that John did leap to the conclusion of the pre-existing life of Him who was yet to come after him?

It was an enigmatical, obscure, and bewildering utterance, but it is neither inconceivable nor irrational, and it does much to account for the effect at once produced by Christ on that "other disciple." The testimony was repeated frequently, and was delivered in a wild cry of transcendental awe. He was as one who had seen a spirit, and who cried out with fear. The reputation of John was so considerable, that the echoes of this cry reached from "Bethany" to Jerusalem, and provoked a special deputation of Pharisees to examine his claims, and make further inquiry into the strange announcement which they found more puzzling than anything he had said since "the day of his showing unto Israel." They took an apparently constitutional method of estimating the position of John. The term "priests and Levites"<sup>1</sup> is the current one to denote those who were employed in the service of the temple, and they were sent from the Pharisaic society of Jerusalem to discharge an obvious duty that had devolved upon them. Eminent as John's position was, he at once disclaimed the idea of being the Christ of Hebrew expectation or prophecy. This incident gives a deep insight into the extraordinary religious life of the Jews—their unusual combination of conservative with progressive thought; their readiness to receive from prophetic men a new impulse and direction for their zeal, even while they were keeping within the lines of the old faith, and jealously guarding their old traditions. They often per-

<sup>1</sup> Josh. iii. 3; viii. 33; Lücke, *in loco*.



formed this task with inward contempt and bitter hate, but with all their worldliness, they must have had vivid intuitions of the unseen and spiritual world. It was as before the unveiled throne, as under the echoes of the thunder of Sinai, that they gave expression to their religious excitability. "Who art thou?" "Why baptizest thou?" Art thou a re-incarnation, a transmigration, a return of Elijah from heaven? Art thou that prophet of whom Moses spake? What is thy connection with Messiah? "Who is this Son of God?" Questions like these indicate the existence of strong underflowing currents of religious feeling; the national life in which they were evident and came to the surface must have been very unusual. I have already discussed the significance of the specific inquiries, and the association of these suppositions with that of the religious performance of the baptismal rite. John makes a formal repudiation of all claims to be their Messiah, to be Elijah in the physical sense of the term, to be *the* prophet in the common conception of a resurrection of one of the old prophets, or to be an authoritative teacher and prophet such as Messiah Himself would prove to be. "No," "I am not," are his laconic replies. The deputation, however, must have an answer to give to the Pharisaic order at Jerusalem, and now press for his explanation of the baptismal rite. It would seem that there was that about John which made them accept his word as final before returning to their masters. He repeats his former testimony, "I am the voice;" "I prepare the way of the Lord;" "there is One coming whose shoe latchet I am not worthy to loose." All this they have heard before. It seems almost a tame



repetition, corresponding with the Oriental method of emphasis by continual assertion of the same formula. If there were nothing more than this, we should be astonished at its sameness. Such for months had been the constant cry of this strange apparition ; but one short sentence interwoven with this response puts a new meaning into the whole—one that makes John abrupt, and hesitating, and impels him to stammer forth his sense of humility and unworthiness in a manner which shows that he has been really and deeply moved. It is not, he replies, in the dim future, or hidden behind the apocalyptic clouds, or amid the serried phalanxes of Rome, or in the secret place of thunder, that your Messiah, your Lord, your Prophet and Lawgiver, your King of kings, is waiting. He stands there in your throng, and you do not know Him (*μέσος δὲ ὑμῶν ἔστηκεν ὃν ὑμεῖς οὐκ οἶδατε*). Jesus has then come back from the temptation of the “forty days,” and this has changed John’s entire conception of Messiah. These had been forty days of strange doubt and fear and distrust for John : but his questionings are resolved at last. The heavens have not opened again. The “might” is the power of the dove rather than that of the eagle ; of great patience, not of noise and strife and tumult. Just as to the terrible Elijah it was in the “still small voice,” rather than in the earthquake, the strong wind, or the fire from heaven, that Jehovah had revealed Himself, so a voice within the second Elijah had said, The Lion of the tribe of Judah has prevailed to unroll the closed book and to loose its seals,—he turned to see, and behold a *Lamb*.

The deepest and simplest explanation of this change of tone in the great forerunner seems to me to lie in



the possibility that Jesus had made John the confidant of His fierce and awful trial. Who more likely than John to have received those confidences from which the synoptic account of the temptation has really proceeded? The devil had made dexterous use of the burning words of John, of John's conception of Messiah, of the baptismal vision and rite, of the heavenly voice, and the solemn utterance of the Baptist, in order to tempt the Divine humanity of the blessed Lord. If He is to fulfil these glowing portraiture, if He is to lay the axe at the root of trees, if He is to prove His alliance with the Eternal powers, if He is to overcome the resistance of the world and secure the allegiance of its rulers, if He is to baptize with fire, why not at once use the might of which John speaks, wield the two-edged brand, burn up all chaff with quenchless fire? *Jesus was tempted, it is true, but without sin.* His spiritual nature and the grace which had been given to Him without measure, conquered the torture of this suggestion. Miraculous powers, superhuman insight, physical agencies and forces, might gain a quick victory, an apparent success; but it was not the easy way, it was the true and new life which He had come to inaugurate. Intelligent, voluntary, spiritual surrender to the Father's will He came to exemplify, excite, and effect. The Captain of salvation was to bring many sons to glory, and His own way was that of suffering and sympathy. "He suffered being tempted." "He must know all that he may succour all." John has learned the mystery, the conflict, the agony, the strange victory of the forty days, and he couples with it the sublime discovery which he had not only made but had boldly proclaimed. No wonder, if so, that John should have



been taciturn and self-abasing when worried by the pretentious, probably hostile, deputation from the Sanhedrim, that he should have more to think of than his own personal claim to baptize his brethren and sisters. Again, with intensity, and yet in brokenness of spirit, he cried, "His shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose."<sup>1</sup>

### § 2. *The Lamb of God.*

On the following day John found a better opportunity to say all that was in his heart. There were at that time other and more susceptible hearers by his side, men who had entered more deeply into the meaning of his revelations, and he too had gone a step further in his education of himself, of his disciples, and of the world. He had learned a crucial lesson, one that had taught him more of his own priestly and prophetic functions than he had before known. He saw Jesus coming to him, and cried aloud to two of his disciples, "BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD WHICH TAKETH AWAY THE SIN OF THE WORLD!"<sup>2</sup>

There has been a prolonged controversy on the meaning of these words, in which, in my judgment, both sides have embodied a portion of the truth. The question has arisen, Were the early Greek interpreters right,

<sup>1</sup> The repetition of the words given by the *Textus Receptus* is not sustained by later editors.

<sup>2</sup> The literature of this passage is considerable, and various attempts have been made to analyse John's exclamation from his own standpoint, to find in it, or to exclude from it, the idea of sacrificial or expiatory offering. Lücke, *Commentar*, Bd. i. 399-416; Lange's *Commentary on John* (American translation), p. 86; Meyer, p. 108; Smeaton on *The Doctrine of the Atonement taught by Christ Himself*, § xiii. pp. 65-79; Crawford on *The Atonement*, part i. §§ 3, 4. Kuinoel and Gabler have classified all the various interpretations, the latter in the second volume *Kleineren Theologischen Schriften Opusc. Academ.* pp. 514-584. Not a few have boldly referred the whole testimony to the author of the fourth Gospel, as Strauss in his *Leben Jesu*.



on the one hand, in supposing that John had received the great representation made by the prophet Isaiah<sup>1</sup> of the vicarious suffering of the holy servant of God, and was his idea limited by that oracle? Was the Lamb of God the Lamb thus appointed by God, and singled out for especial contemplation? or, on the other hand, was John, as a priest, an ascetic, and a Nazarite from his birth, reminded of the grand and terrible symbolism of the sacrificial system which had often been forced upon his consideration? On the latter supposition, was he alluding to the *Paschal lamb*, whose blood was poured out before the Lord, by whose death the nation of priests had been created and delivered from their cruel bondage, by which, year by year, there had been remembrance made of sin, and by which the education of the race had been carried forward? or was the last of the prophets gathering into one glance the long procession of the sacrificial lambs, that had been brought daily, morning and evening, to the tabernacle or the temple for fourteen hundred years?

There need not have been difficulty or controversy on these points. The sacrificial system of "sin-bearing," and the entire providential method in which the judicial effects of sin were permitted to fall, not only upon the first transgressor, but on his children, on the entire people, on the sacrifice presented in the temple, and on the priest who offered it before the Lord, constituted the material out of which Isaiah's mind was led to estimate the work of the righteous servant of the Lord, the great messenger of God, the king and mediator of the true theocracy. The Paschal lamb and the daily sacrifice expound the

<sup>1</sup> Isa. liii. 4-7.



phraseology of Isaiah's oracle. There God's Lamb is portrayed in terms which the writers of the New Testament regarded as a sufficient exposition of the meaning of the death of their Lord. Whether they were right or wrong in their exegesis, there can be no doubt that Matthew,<sup>1</sup> Peter,<sup>2</sup> the Evangelist Philip,<sup>3</sup> Luke,<sup>4</sup> John,<sup>5</sup> Paul,<sup>6</sup> and with these Clemens Romanus<sup>7</sup> and many others, took the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah as the best exposition to them of the character, suffering, and death of the Lord Jesus. Doubtless John the Baptist stood farther back, and on a thoroughly Old Testament platform, but we need not suppose any other standpoint when we find him in a striking metaphor condensing the whole sacrificial system into a burning word based upon Isaiah's oracle touching the suffering servant of Jehovah. The priests and Levites were themselves offerings to the Lord. The blending of the offerer and victim lay deep in Hebrew theology. The Paschal Lamb was a *sin offering*. The blood of it was offered to God to make atonement, and it freed Israel from the curse that fell on the first-born of Egypt.<sup>8</sup> Twice every day a lamb was presented as a *burnt offering*, and accepted by God to make atonement for sin. The main conception of the daily burnt offering was entire consecration to the will of Jehovah.<sup>9</sup> Consumed by fire, it was a parable of life dedicated to the Lord, but in each case the victim was bruised and bled to death for human sin. In addition to the daily burnt offering, the lamb of the *trespass*

<sup>1</sup> Matt. viii. 17.    <sup>2</sup> 1 Pet. ii. 22-25.    <sup>3</sup> Acts viii. 28, ff.    <sup>4</sup> Luke xxii. 37.

<sup>5</sup> Rev. v. 6 ; xiii. 8.

<sup>6</sup> Rom. x. 16.

<sup>7</sup> Clem. 1 *Ep. ad. Cor.* xvi.

<sup>8</sup> See Hengstenberg, *Christology of the Old Test.* vol. iv. E. T. p. 351 ; Baur, quoted by Lücke, *Über die Ursprung und Bedeutung des Passah-festes*, makes the same admission. Lücke, i. 404, takes a different view, but he gives no adequate reason.

<sup>9</sup> Exod. xii. 5 ; xxix. 38. See art. *Opfercultus des A. T.* in Herzog's *Ency.*



*offering* was slain for atonement,<sup>1</sup> either when physical defilement excluded the sufferer from temple worship, when sins of ignorance were revealed to the transgressor, or when a Nazarite had lost, by touching the dead, the advantage of his vow.

The ceremonial of the day of atonement did not require the sacrifice of a lamb, but the high priest took the blood of the bullock of *sin offering* into the holy place, to make atonement for himself, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their "transgressions in all their sins." Of the two kids of goats, one was slain, and the other was made to bear upon him all their iniquities.<sup>2</sup> These various forms of sacrificial worship are, we believe, the true key to Isaiah's prophecy, which in its turn is the basis of the cry of John. It is in the LXX. version of the oracle that we find the words that throw the greatest light upon it. Ver 4. οὗτος τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν φέρει καὶ περὶ ἡμῶν ὀδυνᾶται. Ver. 5. αὐτος δε ἐτραυματίσθη διὰ τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν, &c. Ver. 6. καὶ Κύριος παρέδωκεν αὐτὸν ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις ἡμῶν. Ver. 12. καὶ αὐτὸς ἁμαρτίας πολλῶν ἀνήνεγκε καὶ διὰ τὰς ἀνομίας αὐτῶν παρεδόθη. There is a wide and even a universal ring about John's words which we do not find, *totidem verbis*, in Isaiah. The prophets and priests of Israel thought mainly and first of the deliverance and healing of their own people; but John in his entire teaching had been rising to the high position occupied by the greatest of the prophets, and had conceived the world-wide consequences that

<sup>1</sup> Lev. iv, ; xiv. 11 ; Numb. vii. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Even on the perverse theory of Kalisch, *Comm. on Leviticus*, that the day of atonement was a ceremonial not dating back before the Exile, coupled with the later origin of the second portion of Isaiah's prophecies, it is clear that the fifty-third chapter may have reflected the strong colouring given to the sacrificial character of the great Servant and Lamb of Jehovah.



would result from the coming of the kingdom of heaven. The servant of God is God's Lamb, appointed and consecrated for the highest work of sacrificial suffering and death.<sup>1</sup>

Some writers, like Gabler, understood by the expression of the Baptist his profound appreciation of the sweetness, gentleness, innocence, and patience of the prophet, who would take quietly the insults and the antagonism of an unsympathetic and depraved world. Kuinoel followed in the same line of interpretation, but connected a little more closely the two parts of the sentence.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Hebrew formulæ נָשָׂא עוֹן, נָשָׂא חַטֹּאת, are translated variously by LXX., but generally in the sense of bearing the consequences of personal guilt or of the sin of another. Thus the Israelites (Numb. xiv. 34) were condemned to bear their iniquities for forty years, a year for each day that the spies were searching the land.\* In Lev. v. 17, there is the same phraseology used for the sense of guilt brought to the consciousness. In Lev. xx. 17, the same combination in both languages is used for suffering the punishment of grievous moral offence. Numb. xviii. 22, the form occurs which identifies it with obnoxiousness to death.† In Ezek. xviii. 19 and elsewhere the same Hebrew formula is used for bearing the penal consequences of another, of a father's sin. In Lev. x. 17 it is distinctly used of the priestly expiation for sin to be effected by Eleazar (ἵνα ἀφέλῃτε τὴν ἁμαρτίαν τῆς συναγωγῆς καὶ ἐξιλάσῃσθε περὶ αὐτῶν ἔναντι κυρίου). The word ἀφαιρεῖν is the equivalent for נָשָׂא in LXX. in several places when God Himself is described as lifting off sin from the transgressor, and so bearing it as to bear it away. The LXX., moreover, in three other places where God is the subject of the verb נָשָׂא, has rendered it by ἀφαιρῆναι, and been in this followed by all the versions, with the idea of forgiveness, viz., in Psa. xxxii. 5 ; lxxxv. 3 ; Gen. i. 17 ; and in Isa. xxxiii. 24. Many have urged that this rendering of the word must govern all the rest of the places in which it occurs. The word *nasa* does, however, continually change its signification with the context,‡ and such a rendering would be inapplicable in many of the passages we have quoted. Hence the Baptist in using the phrase (ὁ αἶρων τ. α. τ. κ.) was not referring to the power of the Lord to forgive sin, but to take upon Himself the world's guilt and peril in such a way as to suffer under it, and remove it from the world.

<sup>2</sup> "Spectate hunc innocentem, pium, mansuetum totumque Deo ejusque consiliis consecratum ! Hic magna et egregia præstabit, hic removebit (using ἀφαιρεῖν for αἶρειν) peccata hominum, i.e., pravitatem."

\* λήψετε τὰς ἁμαρτίας ὑμῶν for תְּשִׂיאוּ אֶת-עֲוֹנוֹתֵיכֶם.

† תְּשִׂיאוּ חַטֹּאתַי לְמוֹת. LXX. λαβεῖν ἁμαρτίαν θανατηφόρον.

‡ See Fürst and Gesenius. *sub. voce*.



The author of *Ecce Homo* has given recently a new turn to the passage, by supposing that the twenty-third Psalm suggested to the Baptist the image of the Divine Lamb, who by His inward repose and spiritual joyfulness would take the sin of the world away—that whereas *he* was only one of the dogs of the flock, the Lord Jesus would be the Precious Lamb of the Good Shepherd; dowered with heavenly gifts, and rich in the diffusive peace which would chase the world's sin away. It is enough to say that there is no hint of any of these ideas in the passage, nor of the lifting, bearing, expiating, or forgiving, of the world's sin, in the Psalm.

The unwillingness to accept the idea of the suffering servant of God as lying at the root of the Baptist's exclamation, is augmented by the circumstance that the Jews of our Lord's time, and even the disciples themselves, were imperfectly prepared to recognize their Messiah in the vicarious sufferer or the broken-hearted prophet.<sup>1</sup> Still, it can be shown from Jewish writings that the idea was not foreign to the Hebrew mind. Independently of Isaiah liii. and Psalm xxii., and apart from the sacrificial system, which conferred upon these foreshadowings of the cross their finest significance, there is proof that Judaism had not been slow to appreciate the power of sorrow and martyrdom.<sup>2</sup> Josephus makes use of the remarkable language, "that the martyred saints were [*ἀντίψυχον*] a ransom for the sins of the nation; that by the blood of the pious ones, and the propitiation of their death, Divine Providence saved Israel, that had previously been so evil entreated."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> John xii. 34; Matt. xvi. 21, 22; xvii. 23; Luke ix. 45.

<sup>2</sup> See Wisd. ii. 6; v. 13; 2 Macc. vi. 18; vii. 42. Schöttgen. *Hor. Heb.* Tom. ii. on Isaiah liii.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted by Lücke, i. 413, from Jos. *de Macc.* § 17.



The book *Sohar*<sup>1</sup> contains the remarkable sentence, "that the death of the just will expiate the sins of the world;"<sup>2</sup> and many curious proofs are produced from the Talmud by Schöttgen and Eisenmenger that at a later period of Jewish literature, when the temple had been destroyed, there was a common tradition that the Messiah's birth would involve suffering, and that the earlier portion of His work would be the expiation of the sins of Israel.

De Wette (as well as the Socinian and other modern interpreters) conceives that the perception of the sacrificial and suffering aspects of the Son of God, or King of Israel, was utterly foreign to all the other testimonies of John, and is incompatible with the message he subsequently sent from his prison.

With reference to the first of these positions, it is enough to remark once more, that the fourth Evangelist commences where the synoptic narrative closes. John has now come into immediate relations with Jesus. He has, in consequence of the momentous impression produced upon his own mind, seen new meaning in the prophetic picture to which he had already gone for a description of his own official position. The suffering Messiah may have been in the background of his consciousness and expectations, for he had clearly seen that high mountains, deep precipices, crooked places, rough things, must all be removed out of the way of the coming King. He had seen Him axe in hand, and dealing with quenchless fires. He had imagined Him coming in the clouds of heaven,

<sup>1</sup> Ed. *Amstelod*, p. 3, fol. 218, line 14, seq.

<sup>2</sup> See Sommer, *Specimen Theol. Soharicæ*, p. 89; quoted by Hengstenberg, *Appendix to Christology of O. T.* vol. iv. 360-364.



wielding His two-edged sword, threatening the vengeance of the Lord of hosts. There are the elements of great suffering in all this. The opened heaven, the audible voice, the divine calm of Jesus, His submission as a sympathetic sin-bearer to the baptism of repentance, startled John. The synoptic narrative describes the convulsive movement of his diffidence and altered thought, and then details the disappearance of the Christ for forty days of deep affliction and intense agony. He comes back to tell John the mystery of that conflict, and His own calm repudiation of those very courses, some of which might have naturally arisen out of the tone of John's earliest teaching, but which seemed to Him to be what indeed they truly were—temptations of the devil. The position of John is now clearer to him than it was before. Here is the root out of a dry ground, wounded, bruised, bleeding, but not for Himself nor for His own sins. He is as a sheep before her shearers, dumb; He is already led as a lamb to the slaughter, lifting, bearing, carrying away all sin, all ceremonial impurity, all curse and guilt. His atoning sacrifice has begun in the wilderness. The sins of the world have been laid upon Him, and now the cruel death, the silent grave, the ultimate victory, all float before the prophet's eye, and he cries, "Behold the Lamb of God!" That John saw all that the Evangelist and Apocalyptist saw in after years, all that the Christian consciousness has crowded into his words, is not to be supposed. But we think it is clear that the germs of the idea are to be found in the Old Testament, and in the thought of the Jews, that they were suggested to the Baptist by special circumstances, and that he was inspired to communicate them to those who



stood in intimate relations with him. *One* of the two disciples who heard John speak is, by friend and foe, supposed to represent himself to be the author of the Gospel. Upon him the words made deep impression. The "strong Son of God," whose eyes were as a flame of fire, seemed to him also to be the Lamb that was slain. From the baffled and wondering Baptist he learned his first lessons of the infinite mystery involved in the person and work of the Christ.

The world is weary with its cumbrous and futile methods of obtaining deliverance from sin. Consciousness of moral law, and the ever-growing conviction of the comprehensiveness and inflexibility of the physical and mental consequences of actions, deepen the harrowing sense of moral evil, fasten on the transgressor the Nessus-shirt of fire, from which in this nineteenth century, as well as in the first, he struggles hard to be free. "The sin of the world" is even now revealed with awful distinctness to some minds. It is not necessary to go to the cell of the anchorite, where some child of superstition is combating those phantoms of despair which are conjured up by excited brain and morbid tradition. Nor is it requisite to follow the explorer or the missionary into haunts of vice and homes of cruelty, where bold badness deliberately crushes broken hearts and blasphemes Heaven. It is scarcely needful to lift the thin veil of poor excuse and preposterous flattery, with which a flimsy philosophy conceals the evil. The grim, gaunt forms of sin loom through the veil, and the fear of men is not hushed by being told that they should be virtuous and calm, that evil is an accident, and responsibility a dream. Nature—the word being used as another name for God—



may be very beautiful in her glowing sunrise, and fascinating when the light and the mist conceal very much from view ; but Nature, bearing man in her bosom, and evolving him, sin and all, out of her eternal depths, “without any interference” of God or devil, is very ghastly and terrible. Under this awful vision, the hearts of thousands have been hurried, crushed and blaspheming, into the darkness. The sin of the world, in its individual forms and its terrible aggregate, presses upon conscience as a fault and a removable evil. Hence its awful burden. From this springs the whole history of sacrifices and atonements. If sin is to be taken away from the world, the twofold process of redemption and renewal must be involved in the act. (a) The conscience must be assured that the law has not been trifled with ; that it is safe and right to believe in God as able to save, ready to forgive, waiting to bless ; that the universal voice of nature has failed to speak all the truth ; that a Father’s heart pulsates behind the eternal laws ; that He has revealed Himself, in a higher form than nature can ever approach, through a human life which still towers above the loftiest evolution of humanity ; that *HOLY LOVE is at the heart of the universe ; that GRACE will reign through righteousness unto eternal life !* But (b) more than this, the sin itself, as well as all its natural consequences, must be expelled from the individual and the aggregate. There must be the new life, as well as the new relationship with God.

It is most impressive to find that John the Baptist perceived, with an intensity which plainly amounted to Divine inspiration, and has conferred immortal honour on his name, the truth that Jesus was not only the Baptizer with the Holy Ghost, but the Lamb of God ; and



that He was both, because He was the eternal Son of the Father. He did more than perhaps any other human being has done to create this sublime, synthetic view of the person, work, and glory of Messiah. When the new light flashed upon his consciousness that Jesus was the sacrificial and vicarious sufferer who was taking away the sin of the world, he did not shrink from his previous testimony, but reiterated it. The baptism with the Holy Ghost, the Divine Sonship, the power to effect the one and to sustain the dignity of the other, are not incompatible with the agonies by which He should expiate the shame and guilt of mankind. John saw that because He is the Son of God, and because He can impart the spirit of holiness, therefore He is able to fulfil the prophetic picture. The entire work of redemption involves those grand objective facts and prerequisites which we sum up in the word Incarnation, and those subjective changes, that fundamental renewal and transformation, which are involved in the work of the Holy Spirit. John does not go back from his superb Hebraic and prophetic ideal of a true Son of God, of a Baptizer with the Holy Ghost, because he has passed into a new phase of prophetic insight. On the contrary, his deepest convictions are confirmed by the oracle of Isaiah. Doubtless the words were pealing in his ears, "Therefore I will divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, *because* he hath poured out his soul unto death." The new phrase, then, connotes all that the Old Testament connected with the Messiah. John has found a form of words which embraces the whole idea, and he condenses it into one burning sentence.

Thus it came to pass, therefore, on the day which



followed his first announcement of the "Lamb of God," John was once [πάλιν εἰστήκει] more "standing" on some well-known spot, when two of his most susceptible disciples were within call. One is Andrew, the brother of Simon, and the other, without doubt, the author of the Gospel. Jesus is *walking* [ἐμβλέψας τῷ Ἰησοῦ περιπατοῦντι] in the midst of the crowd, unperceived, unappreciated, unrecognized, a "root out of a dry ground," and without the form and comeliness that eager enthusiasts might desiderate. He is not in direct communication with John. He has not assumed the character of a Teacher or Prophet, a Nazarite or Essene. There is a cloud of loneliness upon Him. He has not as yet called one disciple to His tent, not even John himself; and the Baptist, fixing his gaze on Him, once more sums up the teaching of the previous day, "Behold the Lamb of God." It is enough for these two disciples. The Baptist has snapped the bond which had united them to himself, and has spoken the word which made these men conspicuous for ever in the group which "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth."

The scene was indelibly impressed upon the susceptible mind of the disciple whom Jesus loved. The two friends had been prepared by John's preaching to receive something higher. Convinced of sin, they longed for deliverance from it. Having been summoned to repentance, they had been necessarily as dissatisfied with their unaided efforts to repent, as with their sins. They must have craved the spring of a higher life. John had substituted baptism for a vast round of burdensome ceremonies. They had been set free from a heavy bondage, but they must have become proportionally



eager for the spirit-baptism. They were yearning to see and enter the kingdom of heaven. They believed John when he said that it was at hand, and doubtless they were as anxious then as at a later period to be near and with its King. John had placed before them a lofty idea of morality, of righteous conduct; but honest confession of sin throws a fierce light upon the inner life, and reveals a depth of need and helplessness which makes some at least long after a higher teaching, and the gift of a new and heavenly righteousness. This was not the case with all the disciples of John. The way of Christ had been prepared in some hearts, but many of John's hearers were content with that purification, the need of which had formed the burden of his teaching. Such felt that the gospel of moral conduct, of appropriate lustration, and eager hope, was enough for them, and they still clung to their Master. But these two disciples, and in all probability the entire group introduced to us in the narrative of the fourth Gospel, viz., Simon Peter, Philip of Bethsaida, and Nathaniel, had all submitted themselves to the baptismal rite. It is not improbable that Nicodemus also had been coming to the light and seeking repentance, divine help, and teaching at the hands of John. In various ways they had each been prepared for their Lord. Their slightly-sketched characteristics reveal in every case the kind of impulse towards Christ that had been quickened by the teaching of John, and moreover involve some elements of that self-revelation on the part of Jesus which now began to evince itself. There is one little touch which Renan magnifies into a circumstance that would go far to annihilate the chronological if not the historical trustworthiness of the narrative. Andrew



and his companion excite the attention of Jesus. He sees them following Him, and turns towards them with the inquiry, "What seek ye?" They say, "*Rabbi*, where dwellest thou?" This is the minute hint which we imagine leads Renan to say that when John and Jesus met on the banks of the Jordan, the latter "was already surrounded by a group of followers." There is no proof of this. The title which they gave to Jesus was doubtless one of technical significance, but it was a term of courtesy peculiarly appropriate to one who could fulfil the portraiture of the Baptist, and was competent to be their Master and Lord. Their instinctive reverence was thus expressed, and nothing more. They gave Him the name which He was not unwilling to adopt,<sup>1</sup> and they did so at the first glance. We are not compelled to suppose that there was a still earlier group of which we know nothing, who had received no instruction from the forerunner. The special inquiry, "Where abidest thou?" reveals the characteristic longing of the disciple whom Jesus loved to be near and with his Master, to draw life from close and quiet converse, and from intimate fellowship with Him. Not the laconic sentence, not the solitary word, but the long communion, the undisturbed instruction, the fulness of help and spiritual light, were what he craved. Andrew was convinced that the mysterious stranger was "the Christ," and this is the inducement that he urges on his "own brother Simon." Simon must have revealed himself at once to the Master, as open, impetuous, vehement in his protestations. These impressions arose easily in minds already prepared to believe in the coming of the Christ, roused to an intensity of eager expectation,

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxiii. 8 ; John xiii. 15.



and recently assured, by the utterance of the strong conviction of the last of the prophets, that the Christ Himself was in the midst of them. There was a gentle side of the Baptist's nature which the fourth Evangelist has exhibited, but which the Synoptists also reveal in the exceeding humility and self-abasement to which they frequently refer. It would seem as if his disciple John knew the inmost soul of the great prophet, had come into his deepest intimacy, and found there that which moulded his desire to know after the same fashion the Holy Lamb of God.

No further communion between John and Jesus seems to have taken place. They were near to each other, but not more closely related. John did not himself at once proceed, as his disciples did, to follow Jesus. Still more remarkable is it that our Lord did not command him to do so, but arranged to leave the spot so sacred and so awful to Himself, and return to Galilee. Either before, or on the journey from the Jordan to Galilee, Jesus called Philip to join the little group of the first disciples. Very shortly he too is convinced that the long-expected One of whom Moses had written and the prophets had spoken, had indeed come to them in the obscure, almost extinguished family of David. Philip seems to have known the family history and parentage of Jesus as it was commonly understood, and he is not baffled by this untoward beginning of a grand career. The personal influence of Jesus seems to have flashed conviction upon his mind, as it had done by a glance upon the Baptist. The strongest argument he could use with Nathaniel was "Come and see." "To look is to believe." He had much more to learn, and it was to this man that Jesus said on a subsequent occasion, "Have



I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?" The argument on which He dwelt was characteristic of the use which the apostles and the early patristic writers made of the Old Testament—"We have found him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write"—but this reveals strongly the purely Hebraic position in which the disciples of John were standing. If, as Lange and Schaff suggest, the spot where the conversation with Nathaniel took place was near to the ford where Jacob received the name of Israel, and wrestled with the angel of the Lord; near to the spot where the tribes of Israel had crossed the Jordan and left their memorial of deliverance, and where the first Elijah had passed on his last journey to the skies; it is not remarkable that the Lord should promise to the "Israelite indeed" further visions of the opened heavens and the establishment of glorious communications between earth and heaven. But all is yet more comprehensible, if we assume that Nathaniel under the fig tree had been intently pondering the teaching of the Baptist and his latest utterances. Did he reason thus? "He who has his axe at the root of the trees, who, by his judicial glance knows the fruitful from the barren tree, who will burn up the worthless with unquenchable fire, has come. Can it be true that the Christ, the King of Israel, the Lord of the temple and the Baptizer with the Holy Ghost, is in the crowd? Will the Christ crush me or save me? Would that I, too, might have visions of the opened heaven?" Is it unreasonable or unhistorical to suppose this train of thought passing through the mind of a disciple of John? If not, then we can understand the conversation that passed be-



tween Nathaniel and Jesus. "Before Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree I saw thee. Nathaniel answered and said to him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel. Jesus answered, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? Thou shalt see greater things than these. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man."

Jesus disappeared from the fords of the Jordan. Several weeks elapsed, and events of astonishing interest occurred. The Passover was celebrated, and further revelations of the glory of Jesus convinced many of His Divine mission. All Jerusalem was excited, and even to some extent exasperated by the supreme claims of the young Prophet of Nazareth. The Sanhedrim itself trembled. "We know," says one of them, "that thou art a teacher sent from God, for no one could do the signs which thou art showing unless God were with him."<sup>1</sup> The crowds flocking to the feast seem to have broken up the baptismal gatherings on the banks of the Jordan, and the name of Jesus is on the lips of multitudes. These events and teachings do not come into our present discussion, and we have simply to inquire into their bearing on the position and attitude of John. He has not been to the feast. He has not shared in the excitement. True to his ascetic, Nazaritic training, he is still saying to his countrymen, "If you would hear my message, you must come out into the wilderness to hear it." He has indeed changed his scene of work, not however without leaving a deep impression on the permanent residents there, for towards the close of our Lord's

<sup>1</sup> John iii. 2.



ministry He retired to this very place where John at first baptized, out of the jurisdiction of Pilate, and away from the excitement of the metropolis. The people of Bethany were impressed with the contrast between John and Jesus, as appears from their remark, "John did no miracle, but all things that he spake of this man were true," and it is added, "many believed on him there."

### § 3. *The Bridegroom.*

John had discovered, by Divine teaching and prophetic inspiration, the profound and unique relation of Jesus to the Father-God. He had further perceived in Him a relation to the whole human race; he had struck the key-note of that glorious chorus of entreaty and consolation which had been sounding in the world from that day to this: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." But John had yet more to learn and more to teach. What induced him to remove from Bethany to Ænon is not stated, but it is probable that the excitement and enthusiasm of the people had rendered his position insecure. Our Lord referred to the evil things which John suffered at the hands of the rulers of the people, and also to the fickleness of the multitude concerning him. John may have sought to give the Samaritans the same glorious and terrible assurance which had already stirred the people of Judæa and Galilee to their depths; but he must have looked eagerly for the signs which would prove the accuracy of his predictions and the justness of his delineations. The first thing that must have startled him was, that Jesus commenced His ministry by a practice similar to his own. "He made and baptized more disciples than John." He adopted the emblematic rite, and the mul-



titudes who had become familiar with it in John's hands, went to Jesus for the confession of their sin, and the expression of their faith in the kingdom of God. But there were marvellous differences between the modes in which these two men pursued a similar work. The entire method of Jesus differed profoundly from that of John. He went at once to the homes of the people, and shared in their domestic joys; took His place at a wedding feast, and vindicated His Divine origin and powers by the exuberance of His bounty, and the brilliance of His sympathy with common needs and with innocent mirth. He who would not turn stones into bread to save Himself from starvation, turned water into wine to gladden human hearts, and honour the great institution of the family. The news of this extraordinary event must have profoundly affected John, and, probably upon its suggestion, he began at once to think of the great BRIDEGROOM of the true Israel, and of the joy of His friendship. Such "glory" as this, coupled with the preaching of repentance and of the kingdom of heaven, formed a chasm between the two prophets that could not be bridged. The story of the miracle has been the *crux* of the mythicist, for it seems impossible to discern the tendency which could account for, or the party who would or could have invented, however innocently, such a mythus. John was capable of noble self-sacrifice; though fierce and terrible, he was also meek and self-denying, and he saw that sympathy was "mightier" than reproach, that the ministration of the Spirit was more glorious than the ministration of death. "He must increase," thought John; "I must decrease." Jesus, as we have seen, had travelled from place to place, from the Jordan to Cana,



from Cana to Capernaum, amid the busy sights and scenes and synagogues of the lake of Galilee, and then throwing Himself into the Passover group, had made His way to the metropolis, surrounded by disciples. There He put forth His power. He was angry with the desecration of His Father's house. His sympathy with innocent joy, and with scenes from which the Essenic spirit had turned away in partial reprobation, was not sympathy with sin. The long-permitted profanation of the temple by traffic that destroyed its character as the symbol of the accessible God, as the earthly picture of the Holy Father's house, aroused His wrath. The money-changers, the priests, and the cattle dealers, who were growing unjustly rich on "the sin" of the people, were summarily ejected from the courts of the temple. The moment when the Living Temple was about to reveal its own transcendent superiority to that built by Herodian gold, encrusted with precious marbles, and distinguished by splendid and terrible ritual, was not the moment in which the typical sanctuary could be disfigured by lust and worldliness! His word, His prophetic denunciation, His uplifted rod, seemed for a moment to transform the Lamb of God into the Lion of the tribe of Judah. The mysterious words that followed this surprising act were not, according to his own confession, understood even by the author of the fourth Gospel until after the resurrection of Jesus. It was not remarkable that John should take this theocratic act for a grand inauguration of the new kingdom. It seemed for a while as if his more specific predictions of the coming One were being justified by the event. The axe was being laid even with violence at the root of the trees. The days were coming that would burn as an



oven. John, in his most daring mood, had not bearded the lions in their den. He had not gone into the haunts of sin and the scenes of irreverence, and taken a revolutionary step like this.

It was while the news of the temple-cleansing and other conspicuous signs of the Divine commission of Jesus were producing their effect on different classes in Jerusalem, that the first—by no means the last—sacramental dispute arose. Jesus left the metropolis, and probably proposed to return with some of the numerous Galilean caravans to the home of His childhood.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 'Ιουδαίαν γῆν is discriminated from Jerusalem, and perhaps also from the Αἰνῶν ἐγγὺς τοῦ Σαλείμ where John was baptizing. Σαλείμ seems to have been the better known spot. According to the *Onomasticon* of Jerome and the statements of Eusebius, CEnon lay "in octavo lapide Scythopoleos ad meridiem juxta Salem et Jordanem," and Salem "in octavo lapide a Scythopoli in campo vicus Salanua." If Scythopolis was the old Bethshean, the two places must have been in Samaria. With this, Jerome, *Ep. ad. Evagrium*, 73; Epiphanius, *Hær.* 52. 2; Rosenmüller, in his *Biblical Geography*; Winer's *Reäl-Wort*; Lücke, *in loco*, agree. Thomson, *Land and Book*, ii. 176, takes the same view, though he could not hear from the Arabs of any site corresponding with these names. Robinson, iii. p. 322, found a Salem near Nablous, far from the Jordan. Hengstenberg thinks, on the other hand, that the two places correspond rather with Shilhim and Ain of Josh. xv. 32, the position of which appears to be on the southern boundary of Judah's territory. שְׁלִיחִים וְעַיִן יְרֵמֹן, or in LXX. Σαλη without Αιν. In Vatican MS. we read Σελεειμ και 'Ρεμμων. In Neh. x. 29, the two places are combined in En-rimmon, and Hensgtenberg thinks that being in the desert, the expression, "there was much water—or many waters—there," πολλά ὕδατα, would have special meaning. But so also would such a statement with reference to any place at some distance from the Jordan on a high-road from Bashan to the sea-coast, or from Galilee to Jerusalem. Wieseler adopts the same view on the ground that Jesus is represented to have gone εἰς τὴν 'Ιουδαίαν γῆν, and there abode. But the territory of Judæa is, as Winer (*Reäl-Wort*, i. 34) shows, distinguished from rather than identified with CEnon, near to Salem. See also F. R. Foy on Joshua, in Lange's *Bible Comm.*, where this place is identified with a spot between Gaza and Beersheba. Dr. Barclay (1858) reports the discovery of CEnon at *Wady Farah*, a secluded valley five miles north-east of Jerusalem (Smith's *Dict.* art. by Grove), but the grounds of his identification are not satisfactory. It seems highly probable that CEnon was in Samaria rather than Judæa, whether near Nablûs, or near the Jordan and Bethshean, is beyond our power to settle. We have the partial identification of name to set over against the statements of Eusebius and Jerome. Lücke sees a difficulty in any Jews going into Samaria for the purpose of baptism. But the very circumstance may be one of the reasons of the inquiry of the *Ἰεω*.



The two prophets were in close proximity, though it is not said that they came into personal relations. Jesus, with His disciples, tarried awhile, and was baptizing by their hands the multitudes who thronged to Him. John was also baptizing still, and though he had left Bethany for Ænon, was still producing a great impression. He was not yet imprisoned. This fact is expressly mentioned, as though the Evangelist meant to imply that force, and not resignation of office, at last brought John's public ministry to a close. While two great teachers were laying emphasis on baptismal rites, certain Jews, who had not accepted the demand of either the one or the other, began to debate their respective claims; and the nature of John's purifying (*καθαρισμός*) was the matter in dispute.

John, in the prosecution of his official work as forerunner, was preparing in Samaria the way of the Lord. The lessons conveyed in his baptism may, to some extent, account for the ideas of the Samaritan woman and her friends, and their readiness to receive the Messiah. At all events, the two prophets were producing effects that were not dissimilar in their outward appearance. As far as Pharisees could judge, they strongly resembled each other, and it merely appeared that the fascination of Jesus, as tested by the ever-increasing number of His disciples, was greater than that of John. This also was involved in the querulous inquiry of the Jew. The *καθαρισμός* of the two teachers began at once to excite attention. We can read between the lines, and see that the discussion (*ζήτησις*) between the Jew and John's disciples turned on the sufficiency or exclusive right and virtue of John's own baptism. Might another administer similar rites? Could another receive the confessions of



the people? Was John's ministry to be terminated by the appearance of the One to whom the Baptist, beyond Jordan, had borne witness? These were serious inquiries, which it was perfectly reasonable to carry at once to John. He alone was competent to solve them, and the reply he made is not without difficulty. In some respects it is so unlike the ordinary manner of John, that it has often been used as an argument against the genuineness of the fourth Gospel. There is *primâ facie* force in the argument, but closer investigation reveals the essentially Hebraic position still retained by John. As we have had occasion to remark before, the Johannine narrative takes up the character, speech, and office of John, just where the Synoptists lay it down. He has undergone a great crisis in his spiritual history. His brief intercourse with Jesus, the demeanour, the baptism, the temptation of Jesus, have altered his idea of the Christ. John is walking in the blinding light of a novel thought, but he has not received an impulse which has compelled him to relinquish his office. He felt his work to be still a preparatory one, and he did not rise beyond the position of the forerunner. John did not begin to baptize into the name of Jesus, but after his old fashion, into the coming of the Christ;<sup>1</sup> he proclaimed the nearness of the kingdom, and the necessity of repentance and righteousness. In doing this he did not provoke the antagonism of the Pharisaic party to the extent that Jesus had done thus early in His ministry, so that the shadow of the cross, which was already falling on the Lamb of God, left *him*

<sup>1</sup> See Acts xix., where it is obvious that the Ephesian disciples, though they had received John's baptism, were for the first time baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus by St. Paul.



still in comparative sunshine. But the first tones of the outcry which would culminate on Golgotha were already heard at Jerusalem. The multitude of Christ's adherents raised the first symptom of alarm. The Jew may, indeed, have wished to enlist the enthusiastic disciples of John against Jesus, to create an angry and jealous feeling, which might have the effect of arresting such dangerous and troublesome claims. Every word was bitter, or charged with innuendo. "*He that was with thee* (dependent on thee, apparently a humble disciple of thy message) *beyond Jordan* (in a better baptizing place than this, on a grand historic site, at a moment of thy greatest influence, when even the Sanhedrim sent to examine and endorse thy self-assertions), *to whom thou hast borne witness* (thus making his position dependent in some respects on thy influence with the people), *behold the same baptizeth, and all men come to him.*" "Are these two baptismal communions to coexist?" "Dost thou approve of the course taken by the new prophet?" Doubtless this question, however it should be resolved by the Baptist, was a momentous one. The issue of the inquiry was a complete schism among the disciples of John. Some were guided by the reply of the Baptist to the higher life, to the fulness of the Master's teaching, to the Spirit-baptism, to the idea of a righteousness that should exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees, to the bearing of His cross, to the absolute trust of soul in the power of the Christ to heal, to help, and to save; but others remained where they were, content with baptismal purification, with personal amendment according to a new and simpler ritual, with the attitude of waiting and of hope, ignorant of the gift and promise of the Holy Ghost.



Our Lord does not appear to have taken any further step in the way of baptismal ceremonial. The fourth Gospel does not again refer to the subject. It seems to have been quietly dropped by the disciples of Jesus from this time onward, until readopted after the resurrection, and made the symbol of the baptism with the Spirit, the pledge of union with the Christian community. But the question presses, If John, according to the fourth Gospel, recognized so much of the Divine nature and sublime functions of Messiah, why did he continue to prepare His way, instead of following in His train? Having done so much, why not complete his work by heroically laying it down? I answer by another question. Is not the language of John in Matt. iii. 14 quite as difficult to understand in the light of the subsequent doubt of the Baptist? Is not the clear utterance of the forerunner's consciousness as to the fact of the Divine Sonship of Jesus, as gathered from the synoptic Gospels, quite as perplexing in view of our Lord's language, "that the least in the kingdom of heaven was greater than he?" The bare fact of John's continuing his baptismal office is preserved in the fourth Gospel only, so also is the obvious implication that the strength and enthusiasm of John's prophetic insight did not lead him into direct fellowship or further intimacy with Jesus, nor produce absolute self-surrender to the supreme authority of the Christ.

John's treatment of the Messianic idea, and his relation to the kingdom of God, correspond with those of the nation of Israel as a whole. Prepared for the reception of Messiah by a network of natural and supernatural influences, by specific training and national institutions, they yet stood outside of the kingdom of God. The



temple and the ritual and the nation itself had to be ground to powder by external means. Judaism clung with such tenacity to its prescriptive privileges, and so gloried in its own destiny, that it knew not the time of its visitation. Hebraic conceptions moreover, afterwards so crept into the Church of Christ, and held Christians themselves so spell-bound, that even they were ready to insist upon the insensate shibboleth, "Except ye be circumcised and keep the law of Moses, ye cannot be saved." The inspired logic, the self-sacrificing enthusiasm of St. Paul, and the awful doom of Jerusalem, were the means used by God to prevent Christianity itself from being imprisoned in the chrysalis which had been for a while necessary to its formation, and indispensable to its proffer of itself to the world. We are still encountered by the same processes and the same punishments, by the strange persistence of forms of thought and of institution which have done their work. The strong vitality residing in all the forces which have been necessary to the development of truth and grace, has given them a lease of energy after they have fulfilled their course. Many things, if they had not possessed an energy and vitality which refused to succumb when their work was really done, would never have done that work at all. This seems to be a fundamental law of nature, but by no means justifies the imputation that this record of John the Baptist is unhistorical, or that it is a fiction of a later time. Perhaps, judged more truly, the apparent puzzle is so much in harmony with the nature of the forces that rule the development of nature and humanity, that its unexpounded presence in the fourth Gospel is evidence of its historical character, rather than of the contrary.



As Moses himself never entered the promised land, and, although, in the glorious fulness of his matured manhood, only gazed from the height of Pisgah on the scene of its future conflicts, glories, and rest, and then died in the embrace of Jehovah, and was hidden in God—so we have in this last utterance of the great prophet of the desert, the record of his brightest vision, the expression of his highest experience, the glance which he cast into the great spiritual kingdom of Messiah, which softened and subdued him, but did not bring him down from his lofty Pisgah, nor enroll him in the army of the second Joshua who was now commencing His strange and wonderful work of bringing many sons unto glory.

What is it that he says? “*A man is unable to receive anything,*” any office, any function, any life-work, “*except it has been given him from heaven.*”<sup>1</sup> Surely this is a universal proposition, applicable alike to John himself and to Jesus; to John’s official mission, and to the course adopted by the Messiah.<sup>2</sup> Surely this was all along the predestinarian view of life and duty that made John the strong, intense man that he was, and it will help to explain the infinite difficulty that he would feel in thinking that his own particular cast and kind of work would ever be finished. “*Ye yourselves bear me witness* (for you have already referred to it, and it is the basis of your present remonstrance) *that I said I am not the Messiah, but that* (This ἀλλ’ ὅτι may be in reference to the discourse, or simply involve transition to the exposition which fol-

<sup>1</sup> ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ = ἄνωθεν.

<sup>2</sup> Wettstein. “Non possum mihi arrogare et rapere quæ Deus non dedit.” Lange says wrongly that Lücke refers the position to the Baptist’s own experience. On the contrary, Lücke agrees with Luthardt and himself in the double reference.



lows.) *I have been sent before Him* (not the Messiah, but *ἐκείνου*, viz., that one of whom you have spoken). John so far only reiterates his former position, except that he boldly implies: "This is the Christ, but my place is not at His side, not waiting in His train, but breaking up a way for Him. I am here still, making the mountains low and filling up the valleys for the approach of the great King." After this he seems to have turned in thought to the prophetic representations which sometimes portray Jehovah, and sometimes "Jehovah's King," as the *Bridegroom* of the theocratic people.<sup>1</sup> John may have been profoundly touched by the extraordinary intelligence that must have reached him, how that Jesus had manifested His glory at a wedding feast. He, the forerunner, had come neither eating nor drinking, and many had shrunk from his rigid abstinence: Jesus had shown at once that His entire conception of the kingdom was to be realized *in* human life and society, and not in separation from it. There was power in this pure and holy sympathy which would captivate the heart of the true Israel, and John, full of the Old Testament poetry, thinks of the bridal of heaven and earth in this new and wonderful mission of Messiah. But he throws in an original thought, and one foreign to the Old Testament illustration. It is one which our Lord once more uses when dealing with the disciples of John and their dispute with His own disciples. He says: "*He that hath the bride is the bridegroom, but the friend of the bridegroom,<sup>2</sup> who standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth*

<sup>1</sup> Thus Psa. xlv. ; Isa. liv. 5 ; Hos. ii. 18, 19. The poetry of Canticles and many passages in Ezekiel had familiarized the Jews with the image of the Bridegroom, and of His royal espousals with the daughter of Judah.

<sup>2</sup> Suicer, *arts.* *παρανύμφιος*, *φίλος τοῦ νυμφίου*, and *ἀρχιτρίκλινος*. Schöttgen and Lücke speak of the strange duties devolving on the *Schaschen*.



*with joy, by reason of the voice of the bridegroom: this my joy hath been made full."*

The friend of the bridegroom, one who was neither bride nor bridegroom, had in Hebrew custom an important function; he mediated between the two parties, he prepared the way for their love, he smoothed their difficulties, he presided as master of ceremonies over the marriage processions and the feast; and it is not impossible that as John had heard that the friend of the Cana bridegroom was the emphatic witness of the greatness and the quality of the sign which Jesus had given of His Divine commission, so he bethought him that he was himself the witness of the superlative claims and the glory of this mysterious Being who was, in a sense in which *he* could never be, the bridegroom of the theocracy.<sup>1</sup> The "standing and hearing" may be a part of this poetic picture, not resting on any closer resemblance than a reference to the habits of the times. John's knowledge of the Christ, and the revelation of the glory of His sympathetic suffering and congenial gladness, completed his joy, and utterly satisfied him. The stern prophet is shouting Hallelujah. Still *he* is independent of the bride herself, he has official work to do on her account and his, but he does not merge himself in his work, nor does he either abolish or resign his office. Then come the memorable words, "*He must increase, but I must decrease.*" John was capable of this. His greatness of nature, as presented in the synoptic narrative, has abundantly prepared us for this sublime self-abnegation. Yet it is full of instruction to notice that he does not speak of relinquishing his peculiar functions. He must pale in the glory of the risen

<sup>1</sup> See John ii. 1-12.



sun, but he will not be extinguished. He must decrease, but a "voice" he is still, and he still cries, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." He decreases, his mission is approaching its end, but it is not ended. A kingdom of righteousness and spiritual power and holy love must be proclaimed, and will still need all his might as a herald and messenger from heaven.

Commentators like Bengel, Olshausen, Tholuck, Da Costa, and others, as well as Paulus, Strauss, Weisse, and many who lose no opportunity of disputing the historical character of all the discourses of the fourth Gospel, maintain that the closing words of John iii. 31-35 are a comment of the Evangelist, in accordance with a recognized manner in which he continually glides from the fact or word he is reciting into reflections of his own, less in the character of the interlocutor to whom he refers, than in that of the reverent and sympathising friend. I am disposed to admit that there are discourses of the Evangelist, expositions of the words of our Lord, summaries of His teaching, which *are* appended to the solemn testimonies that he recites. It does not seem to me unreasonable to suppose that we have here a specimen of this peculiar method of the fourth Evangelist. Still, every such instance of these expansions demands careful study and comparison, and the effort should be made to discern whether any different impression be conveyed by him. If we admit that the author of the fourth Gospel wishes us to believe that he is reporting the words of Jesus or John, when he can be clearly seen to be constructing a supposed speech, then the authenticity of these discourses would not exceed that of the speeches in Thucydides or Tacitus, and they would, to a great extent, lose their



claim to convey to us the thoughts, the innermost heart of the incarnate Logos. It seems to me that we may recognize in the fourth Gospel summaries of longer discourse, but not unauthorized additions to the brief gnomic sayings of his great teachers. With Meyer, Lange, Lücke, and others, I am inclined to think that, difficult as it is to suppose a testimony like this issuing from one who subsequently sent the message from the prison, there are peculiarities about it which can only have proceeded from the Baptist himself. One supposition seems to me to be imperative: it is that the reporter of the discourse on this occasion was the auditor of the conversation with Nicodemus, and that there was a style of utterance, a peculiarity of phrase current among the more spiritual of the disciples of both John and Jesus, which must be recovered if we hope ever to solve the difficult problem.

We have seen that the Baptist was aware of the pre-existence of Messiah, of the incarnation of God in Jesus, of the lofty claims of this divinely-sent messenger, and that he knew that He who would baptize with the Holy Ghost was greater than he. Is there any need then to suppose an evangelistic expansion of the thought that "he that cometh (ὁ ἄνωθεν ἐρχόμενος) from above is above all"? Is not this a conclusive answer to the question of his disciple? And is not the oft-repeated contrast between his own mission, origin, and call, and that of the Christ, expressed here in terms perfectly Johannine to the last? Jesus had spoken of the need and fact of spiritual regeneration, as one of the earthly things (τὰ ἐπίγεια) contrasted with the heavenly things (τὰ ἐπουράνια), which answered to the difficult question of Nicodemus, "*How* can these things



be?" Christ did go on to speak of the heavenly things, to show the mystery of heavenly love, the reasons and laws of Divine procedure. John could only testify of the earthly forms and outward facts of the heavenly kingdom. He had not gazed on their hidden meaning, and knew not the method in which that kingdom was to be set up. Let us make the supposition that the language that passed between Jesus and Nicodemus was with other matters reported to John, and then the entire meaning of his word flashes into light. He whose being and origin is (*ἐκ τῆς γῆς*) from the earth, is himself, as a teacher and commander of men, also (*ἐκ τῆς γῆς*) of the earth, and he speaks (*τὰ ἐπίγεια*) the earthly things; but He who is from above, who (*ἐκ οὐρανοῦ ἐρχόμενος*) cometh from heaven, though He is still in heaven,<sup>1</sup> is "above all." Is not John revolving here the enigmatical words? And in spite of the appeal, "the same baptizeth, and all men come to him," is he not repeating the Master's tragic confession, and confirming his solemn statement, "that which he hath seen and heard, that or this alone (*τοῦτο*) he testifieth. And no one (*i. e.*, no one in comparison of his claims) receiveth his testimony?"<sup>2</sup> But John has to justify the course taken by many of his own disciples, and to modify the sweeping, hyperbolical assertion, "no one receiveth his testimony." He refers to exceptions, he knows that some were deeply entering into the fellowship of the ONE mightier than he. They, according to John, were finding out that God was true to His own promise. Surely the thirty-fourth verse (whoever wrote it down for us) refers to Christ, not to the Baptist. It is a vindication of the previous statement. The words (*ῥήματα*) of God

<sup>1</sup> See John iii. 13.<sup>2</sup> Compare John iii. 11.



were uttered by Him to whom boundless measures of the Spirit were given, and hence to receive His testimony is to see the Father's heart, to read His thought, to discern His faithfulness, to set a seal to the fact that God is true. The use of the word (*πατήρ*) Father, the reference to the love of the Father, to the power of faith, to the abiding of wrath upon the disobedient, and the enjoyment and realization of the eternal life in faith, are in advance of John's general position; but they may be accounted for on the supposition that the auditor in the chamber where Nicodemus learned of Jesus had repeated the substance of that discourse to the great forerunner, and that *this* is his comment upon it. It seems to me we are driven either to this supposition or to the hypothesis that these closing words are the narrator's supplement to the discourse of John.

But John has learned and has declared the sublime conception involved in the living, loving intimacy that should prevail between the eternal Son of God and those who should surrender themselves to His love. The Fatherhood of God, the vision of the Lamb, the bridal of the Church: these were the themes on which he dilated at last, but he did not withdraw the summons to repentance, nor cease to believe in the curse which was hanging over pride, sensuality, and selfishness. Is it from the blending of these strange and solemn words that his own most susceptible disciple, and he whom Jesus loved, should, like his first master, have spoken of "the BRIDE" and "THE WRATH OF THE LAMB"?







## LECTURE VII.

*THE MINISTRY OF THE PRISON.*







## LECTURE VII.

### THE MINISTRY OF THE PRISON.

**W**E have seen John's ministry exposed to sundry checks, and have obtained certain hints of the existence of organized and malicious opposition. For some unstated reason, the crowded baptismal scenes on the borders of Jordan were brought to an abrupt conclusion. When John retired into Peræa, and there came into contact with the Christ, and passed through a moral and spiritual change of amazing influence on his subsequent career, he was pursued by official, pragmatic interrogatories on the part of those who had no belief in his claims, and who apprehended very imperfectly the mission that he had undertaken to fulfil. The division among his followers consequent on his emphatic testimonies to Jesus, or some other unrecorded event, induced him to come directly into the very heart of Samaria, and there to continue his baptism of repentance and his testimonies to One mightier than himself. Here he must have exposed himself to the observation of the court of Herod, which would hold itself responsible for a breach of the peace. The prophet who had not shrunk from exposing the special vices of the extortionate publicans, and the secret insincerities of the Pharisees and scribes, a man whose whole life was a witness to the sanctities



of the law of God, who had retired into the wilderness that he might pursue the dream of a lofty Levitical and ascetic purity, could not be silent when he saw the shameless lust of the Herodian house, and the specific violation of the law of nature and of God in the person of the tetrarch. By the *Levirate* law,<sup>1</sup> it was the duty of a man to marry the widow of his brother if she was childless, but in the case of the existence of offspring, the practice not only revolted the natural sense, but violated the legal requirement.<sup>2</sup> Herod Antipas had not the excuse of the Levirate law for marrying or proposing to marry his brother Philip's wife. That brother was still living,<sup>3</sup> though in obscurity.<sup>4</sup> Herodias had already married her uncle, and was now proposing to exchange one blood relation for another. Further, she was the mother of Salome, whose existence not only obviated the incidence of the Levirate law, but brought the act under the ban of the distinct enactment of the Mosaic code,<sup>5</sup> made the Le-

<sup>1</sup> Levirate, from *levir*, Latin for husband's brother, a word which corresponds with the Hebrew word  $\text{לֵוִיָּת}$ , a brother-in-law. The latter gives its name to the treatise in the Mishnah called *Jebamoth*, which is mainly concerned with the various regulations for enforcing the Levirate law. See Deut. xxv. 5-10, where the law and its modification occurs; art. "Marriage" in Kitto's *Cycl.*, by Dr. Ginsberg; and art. "Marriage," in Smith's *Dict. Bible*; also art. "Leviratsehe" in Herzog's *Ency.* Cf. Gen. xxxviii.; Ruth iii. 1, ff.; iv. 1, ff. From Matt. xxii. 24 and parallel passages, it is clear that the law was in force at the time of our Lord. In some form the same law has been found in operation among the Moabites (Ruth i. 11-13), the Hindus, the Persians (*Zendavesta*, iii. 226, quoted by Leyrer in Herzog's *Ency.*), and even by some Arabian tribes to the present day. Among Oriental nations the idea of preserving the name of a family will lead to great sacrifices. <sup>2</sup> Lev. xviii. 16; xx. 21.

<sup>3</sup> We learn this from Josephus, *Antiq.* xviii. 5. 4 ( $\delta\iota\alpha\sigma\tau\alpha\sigma\alpha\ \zeta\omega\nu\tau\omicron\varsigma$ ).

<sup>4</sup> See *ante*, pp. 49-54, for the confusion between this Philip and Philip the tetrarch of Ituræa, and Appendix A.

<sup>5</sup> Lev. xviii. 16; xx. 21. Kalisch, *in loco*, urges the impossibility of the two laws being coexistent, and thinks that the Levitical legislation, being post-exile, ignored the ethnic Levirate. This, however, is completely refuted by the Gospels, and by the later prevalence of the practice and its restrictions.



vitical law prevail, and stigmatized as incest what might on the death of Philip have been at least condoned. Further, in order to accomplish his object, Herod had to divorce the daughter of Aretas.

Josephus mentions the irregularities of Herod Antipas, and his passion for his brother's wife, and alludes, as we have seen, to the divorce of the daughter of the Arabian Emir, and to the way in which this event led to the ultimate ruin of Herod. He also refers to the circumstance that Herod imprisoned John at the castle of Machærus, and put him to death. He does not, however, connect the brave rebuke administered by the Baptist with his imprisonment or death, but assigns political reasons for the step. "When many," says he, "had rallied round John, for they were greatly excited at his words, Herod, fearing lest his great influence over them might lead to a rebellion or revolt, for they seemed to act in all things according to his advice, thought it better, before any revolutionary movement had occurred, to seize and put him to death, rather than fall into trouble and repent when the change had occurred; and he (John) was sent bound to Machærus, and there put to death." This is not incompatible with the synoptic narrative. If the profligate prince were anxious to keep his subjects from any outbreak of fanatical morality, and if John had bearded him to his face with the cry, "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife," he may have shrewdly conjectured that John had not confined to royal ears alone his denunciation of a gross act of adultery committed in high places. The political necessity was the ostensible cause of the act; the malice of Herodias, kindled by the conjectural effect of an outbreak of popular violence, wrought upon the weak nature



of Herod, and provided the true motive for the imprisonment and martyrdom of the last of the prophets.

Matthew<sup>1</sup> expressly tells us that Herod wished to put John to death, but was restrained by the reverence of the people. Mark<sup>2</sup> penetrates more deeply into the secret, by showing that the source of Herod's apparent wish was the hatred of Herodias, rendered impotent for a while by Herod's high esteem for John's character. "He knew him to be a just and holy man," so, though he kept him in guard, "he heard him, did many things, and (even) heard him gladly." Herod's composite nature is revealed in the threefold narrative. His superstitious fears combated for a while his ambition. His dislike of his censor was checked by his involuntary admiration. His irresolution was goaded by the bitter resentment of Herodias. As long as John, summoned from his dungeon to the presence of the tetrarch, could persuade Herod to do many things, or as long as the hated influence of the Baptist was admitted, Herodias knew that her crown, and perhaps her life was at stake. She imagined that, in a fit of ungovernable repentance, the tetrarch might dismiss her to her deserved shame, and shatter all her ambitious schemes. Josephus is silent on these more hidden features of the tragedy, but contents himself with giving the political reasons for the detention of John in the castle of Machærus.<sup>3</sup> In a previous chapter he had mentioned Machærus as the fortress to which the divorced wife of Herod had requested to be sent, as soon as she had discovered the infidelity of her husband. "Herod sent her thither, as thinking that his wife had not perceived anything. Now she had sent a good while

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xiv. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Mark vi. 17-20.

<sup>3</sup> *Antiq.* xviii. 5. 2.



before to Machærus, *which was subject to her father*, and so all things necessary for her journey were made ready for her by the generals of Aretas' army, and by that means she soon came into Arabia." The statement by Josephus, that John was imprisoned and executed in Machærus, is sufficient proof that he regarded the occupation of the fortress by Aretas as a very temporary arrangement.<sup>1</sup>

The fortress rendered thus memorable was built by Alexander Jannæus and demolished by Gabinius when he made war on Aristobulus.<sup>2</sup> Subsequently the site belonged to Herod the Great, who adorned it, and gave it the character of a palace as well as a stronghold.

"What was walled in," says Josephus,<sup>3</sup> "was itself a very lofty crag. This simple fact made it very hard to be subdued. It was so contrived by nature that it could not be easily ascended, for it is surrounded on all sides by deep ravines, which could not be crossed or filled up with earth. The ravine which falls off from the west extends sixty furlongs to the Asphaltic Lake. On this same side Machærus crowned the highest peak.<sup>4</sup> But then for the valleys that lay on the north and south sides, although they be not so large as the

<sup>1</sup> Lardner, *Jewish Testimonies*, c. iv. ; *Works*, vol. vii. p. 116. For the different explanations of the transfer of the fortress, see Wieseler, *Chron. Syn.*, and Greswell, *Dissertation ix.*

<sup>2</sup> *Antiq.* xiv. 5. 4. The proximity to Hyrcania and Alexandrium are twice referred to. In *B. J.* i. 8. 2 and 6, the circumstances of the demolition of the fortress are detailed more fully. Strabo, lib. xvi., mentions Machærus among the fortresses on the east side of Jordan, not far from Jericho. Pliny, v. 16, calls it the second fortress of the Jews next after Jerusalem.

<sup>3</sup> *B. J.* vii. 6. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Dr. Tristram, *The Land of Moab ; Travels and Discoveries on the East Side of the Jordan and the Dead Sea*, 1873, says that Josephus, in describing the extreme abruptness and depth of the ravine, was probably speaking of the precipitous cliffs of the parallel *Wady Zgara*, but that he is correct in saying that the valleys north and south were strategically impassable.



western ravine, it is equally impracticable to cross them, while the depth of that on the eastern side could not be less than one hundred cubits." The wall is further represented as enclosing a city as well as a battlement, out of which there was a way that led up to the citadel on the top of the crag. More than this, a second internal wall surrounded the brow of the hill, and lofty towers surmounted the corners of the fortress. In the centre of the doubly-defended citadel a magnificent Herodian palace was erected, and other richly adorned edifices. There were reservoirs of water providing ample supplies, hot and cold springs and medicinal wells, which conferred some special attraction on the rocky fastness. Recent explorers tell us that a magnificent view rewards the climb to the site of this Herodian palace. The whole extent of the Dead Sea, Jerusalem, Hebron, and the whole of the valley of the Jordan, can be seen from this eagle's eyrie. John, if permitted to walk on the ramparts, could take in almost at a glance the scenes of his recent ministry.

The account given by Josephus of the siege of Machærus, under the Roman general Bassus, reveals the fact that there was access to the lower portion of the walled enclosure, and that by a Roman road, remnants of which have now been brought to light. Along the savage ravines of these Moabite hills the prophet must have been led as a prisoner. He must have entered the lower city, and passed the inner wall, and was probably immured in some portion of the citadel. Dr. Tristram thinks he has found the dungeon where it is not improbable that John met his fate. Here he was not altogether shut out from the society of his friends and disciples; he heard



reports, he sent messages, and received answers from the outside world.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The following description of M'Kaur from a MS. of Seetzen, *Zweite Reise zum Todten Meere*, is quoted by Carl Ritter, *Comparative Geography of Palestine*, part i. chap. v. vol. iii. (Clark's translation) p. 65, and accurately corresponds with the account of Josephus. The journey of Seetzen was made in Jan. 1806. Ritter says "he inquired carefully of his Arab guides if they knew the location of Machærus, a place mentioned by Josephus. They spoke, in reply, of several ruins in the neighbourhood, giving their names, among which he noticed that of M'Kaur, which he at once conjectured to be the one he sought. Further inquiry confirmed his suspicion. The ruins are important. They have but a single approach leading over a bridge. He had the year before suspected that the ancient Machærus lay where he now found it to be, but had been unable to confirm his conjecture. The ruins lie on the highest peak of a long ridge, the lower extremity of which towers above the deep rocky valley of Serka Maein. Large hewn stones are still to be seen. The mountain was inaccessible on three sides. It is not at all improbable that the place is the same square seen by Irby and Mangles while on their way from Maein, but which it was beyond their power to reach. In descending westward from M'Kaur, Seetzen encountered a large tract of lava, red, brown, and black in colour, but very porous and light. Still farther down he saw black masses of basalt, resting on a foundation of limestone, visible only in the bed of the stream which ran through the valley. From this place Seetzen went an hour farther along the southern side of the mountain, to spend the night at a little village of the Beni Hameide, a tribe which gave him a hospitable reception." This description by Seetzen appears to have been overlooked by Canon Tristram in his recent work, who describes at full length the interesting researches made by himself and party in 1872. These also confirm the description of Josephus. Dr. Tristram approached it from the river Callirrhœ, travelling due south, and crossing the Wady Z'gara, with its stupendous ravine, having precipitous cliffs eight hundred feet high on one side, and which runs down by a series of steps three thousand eight hundred feet to the Dead Sea. In approaching the next valley the party struck the remains of the *old Roman road* which connected the town and fortress of Machærus with Callirrhœ, and with the great road which started from Petra, and passing through Kerak, Areopolis, Aroer, Heshbon, went northward to Damascus. The branch road led our travellers to the ruins of the town of Machærus, which, without any very striking feature, "cover, in solid mass, more than a square mile of ground." One very curious discovery was made by Canon Tristram, that there was a small temple of the sun erected in the city, showing that, "up to a period not far removed from its destruction, fanatic as may have been its Jewish population, there must have been a large population, either Greek or Syrian, who enjoyed full liberty to practise the rites of the sun-god worship." The town itself, as we learn from Josephus, was not strategically defensible, but was dominated by the fortress, separated from the town "by a narrow and deep valley not quite a mile across." The citadel and the fortress were at two extremities of a long narrow ridge, nearly a mile in length from west to east. The citadel was on the highest point of the ridge, and was compactly built, being about one hundred yards in diameter. The travellers seem clearly to have discovered the *dungeons* of this citadel, and to have been able to discriminate them from cisterns. Under the protection of the citadel was the fortified city, stretching westward



The imprisonment of John at this critical moment in the history of the kingdom of God is an event strangely dissonant with what we should beforehand have supposed to be the law of its evolution. But the kingdom of which he was the herald was the kingdom of self-sacrifice and mysterious suffering. He prepared unconsciously the way of the Crucified. He believed himself to be weaving a crown, but it was a crown of thorns. The sudden termination of his ministry arrested any further divergence between John and Jesus with respect to the nature of the kingdom, and had a wonderful effect upon the majority of John's disciples. It was, moreover, the occasion of our Lord's return to Galilee. The two events are brought more or less together, by both the fourth Gospel and the synoptic narrative, whether we take the earlier or later date of the imprisonment.<sup>1</sup> Our Lord did not escape or avoid the hostility of the secular power by advancing into the territories of the tetrarch, and proclaiming everywhere the kingdom of heaven. From the very first the shadow of the cross fell upon Him, and at the beginning of His ministry, both in Judæa and Galilee, He encountered malice and rejection and murderous designs.

The ministry of John was not, however, brought to a full end. The company of his disciples was not disbanded. The Baptist had not lost his prophetic *prestige* by being shut up in prison. Many of his disciples held aloof from the disciples of Jesus, and the claims of the two teachers were brought into open rivalry. Hints of

by a steep slope to the square tower or fortress which frowned over the ravine. Along this ridge are the débris of the Herodian palace, and from the spot could be obtained a magnificent view of the Dead Sea, of the line of the Jordan, of Jerusalem, Hebron, Neby Samwil, Gilead, of the companion fortress of Masada on the opposite side of the sea, of the cliffs of Engedi, and the oasis of Jericho. See *Land of Moab*, pp. 253-265.

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A.



these instructive rivalries, which we are not at liberty to pass over, arise in the synoptic narrative. The new wine of the kingdom was bursting some of the forms or "old bottles" into which even our Lord's disciples were anxious to pour it. The marriage at Cana and the feast at the house of Levi were stumbling-blocks to the disciples of John and the Pharisees. Pharisees would, and did, find much less to object to, in the Johannine counsels of perfection and ritual observances, than in the new and Divine life of the Spirit which Jesus boldly preached. John's personal character and habit was a recommendation of the ascetic repression of human nature. It would seem that his disciples considered it as an injunction to fasting, and were making themselves conspicuous by the practice.

And now they were pushed forward by the Pharisaic party to make the antagonism more telling. The intended effect of John's final testimony had failed.<sup>1</sup> The jealousy which he had so nobly rebuked had broken forth in his absence, and was augmented by a practical grievance. There were certain points of habitual demeanour and conduct in which the Pharisaic cultus and the Johannine asceticism coincided, and which might be used against our Lord. Christ is asked to explain why the disciples of the Pharisees and of John fast frequently,<sup>2</sup> and His own disciples "fast not," or (Luke), "eat and drink." The addition of the word "prayer" by Luke should be compared with another circumstance mentioned only by him.<sup>3</sup> Christ's disciples, after watching Him at prayer in a certain place,

<sup>1</sup> Keim (l.c. ii. Bd. 365), by conceding a Pauline origin for this discussion, loses half its meaning. See Matt. ix. 14; Mark ii. 18.

<sup>2</sup> "And make many prayers," Luke v. 33.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. xi. 1-3.



came when He had ceased, with the request, "Master, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples." Hence the disciples of John and Jesus were practically discrepant in their habits during a considerable portion of our Lord's ministry. These elements of the Divine life, on which the disciples of John and the Pharisees laid so much emphasis, viz., fasting and prayers, were two of the instances which our Lord chose in His Sermon on the Mount,<sup>1</sup> in order to illustrate His tremendous utterance, "Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

This combination of facts intimates a close practical agreement of the disciples of John with the Pharisaic party, and shows how striking was the contrast between them both, and the true subjects of the kingdom of God. Nevertheless, our Lord, possibly in consideration of the fact that the question was brought forward for His solution by the disciples of John, made an obvious reference to the words of the Baptist, as they are reported in the fourth Gospel. It is one of the undesigned coincidences which tend to prove that the synoptic narrative and that of the fourth Gospel are dealing with the same circle of facts and experiences. John had reproved his disciples for their eagerness and jealousy, by saying, "He that hath the bride is the Bridegroom." The position he claimed was that of "the friend of the Bridegroom," the medium by whom the two were brought into loving nuptial fellowship. Then John recognized in Jesus the guest at a wedding feast, one who was thus pouring a new wine into new

<sup>1</sup> Matt. vi. 1-18.



bottles, transforming water into wine, augmenting and enhancing, not trampling upon the joys of human life ; purifying, not extinguishing human passions and earthly joy. But he did more than this. He hailed Him as the Bridegroom of the true Israel. Many prophetic voices were thus approaching their fulfilment, and our Lord does not hesitate to adopt this illustration of the relation between Himself and humanity.<sup>1</sup>

But, with infinite tenderness and delicacy, Jesus builds His own doctrine of fasting on the peculiar condition of the disciples of John at that moment, and makes some gentle excuse for the moroseness, mourning, and fasting with which they were greeting the daybreak of the world's jubilee. Their master had been taken from them, a sad prelibation of the deeper agony which His own true disciples would experience when the Bridegroom should be taken from the children of the bridechamber. They could not be made to fast while He was with them. But a time will soon come, and may often return in the experience of the true Israel, when the Bridegroom of the Church will be taken from her sight : then there will be mourning and fasting enough. Then they may forget to eat their bread. Then the demands of the soul will become more clamorous than appetite, and there will be much inward fasting, "fasting in secret," and "unto the Father." "They will fast in those days." Christ's teaching repudiates fasting as a means of profession, and most doubtfully admits it as a means of grace. In all cases it is something which is to be real and not hypocritical, the genuine expression before God,

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxii. 1-13 ; xxv. 1-13. Compare also the language of St. Paul, Eph. v. 24-32 ; 2 Cor. xi. 2 ; and the imagery of Rev. xix.



not before man, of the unseen and mighty movements of the Divine life. It is not to be a badge of discipleship, nor the rule of a society, nor the law of a Church. Fellow-man is to know nothing of it, neither as priest nor as confessor. It is a matter between the soul and God, and there will be many seasons when fasting, in this aspect, will not only be seasonable and wise, but imperatively demanded. The disciples of John are warned against mending the old garment of Judaism with a new patch of unmilled cloth. It would be worse still to take for the purpose some fragment torn from another garment. In other words, they are unwise who endeavour to foist in a newly-devised ceremonial that will not assimilate with the venerable robe of Judaism, or who attempt a reconstruction of the outer garments of religious ritual with fragments of Essenic pride or Oriental philosophy. Christ refused to put the new wine of His kingdom into old skins. He poured it into new ones, into the *hearts of men*, not into a prescribed ceremonial. From the new life, all that is necessary in the way of abstinence or prayer will undoubtedly and spontaneously grow. The Lord here enunciated the principle of all true fasting, one which is immeasurably superior to any code of law. Fasting, enjoined for fasting's sake, will choke the principle by which it ought to be regulated. The Johannine regimen had never approached the grandeur of this "law-making power." Essenism, Buddhism, Pharisaism, fell short of this. Strange to say, it has taken ages to establish this law of the kingdom, even in the Church of Christ. The Johannine custom has for a while triumphed over Christianity. Christ foresaw, and even prophesied this in words which Luke alone has pre-



served :<sup>1</sup> “No one having drunk old wine [straightway] desireth new, for he saith, The old is better.” This is the reception ever given to new ideas, to revolutionary principles, either in criticism or observance, classification or nomenclature. The world and the Church alike exclaim, “The old is better.” Christ, with His wondrous patience and condescension to human weakness, admits the difficulty that His doctrine of fasting and Sabbatic observance, and His doctrine concerning devout habits and professions, will meet with. Even the Divine life, as well as the old law, is “weak through the flesh.” The many prayers (*δεήσεις*) of John’s disciples doubtless corresponded with the “many prayers” of the Pharisees, and the liturgical forms of the Essenes, “the vain repetitions” against which the Lord protested, and the hypocritical and ostentatious religiousness which loved to offer prayer in public places, for the sake of the reputation for sanctity which it achieved. Withering scorn on the practice fell from our Lord’s lips, and prayer, like fasting, is declared by Him to be a matter between God and the soul of man. The Eye that seeth in secret, the Father who knows all our need before we ask, who is more willing than an earthly father to bestow His richest gifts, is the sole necessary witness of our prayer. “Alone with God” is the motto of the Christian disciple. The Lord, on both the occasions when He was asked for guidance in the matter of prayer, gave substantially the same simple, comprehensive enumeration of all human need. This is not the place to comment upon it. Far from believing “the Lord’s

<sup>1</sup> Luke v. 39. The *ἐνθιως* is rejected by Tregelles and Tischendorf, although it is to be found in many uncials and in the Vulgate, a, b, c.



Prayer" to be a Pharisaic, Rabbinic, or Essenic prayer, which may have been common to our Lord and to John, and which was recited at their command by the disciples of both, we rather see reason to believe that it was in its fulness the original thought of the Divine Master. It is yet to be proved that more than a few isolated petitions—found in the latest Jewish literature—can be traced to any earlier source than the Gospels. The divinity of "the Lord's prayer" does not consist in the details, but in the Lord's choice of them, and in their marvellous comprehensiveness. The freedom with which Christ Himself varied its form, and condemned the "vain repetition" of any prayer, ought to have rescued it from the "*battology*" to which it has been degraded. No hint is given us of the "prayer" which John taught his disciples; but it becomes almost certain that they made themselves conspicuous by their profession of devoutness, and their frequent iteration of some liturgical forms.

There is one event which casts a ray of burning light into the dungeon of Machærus. The revelation it supplies is of prime importance in estimating the relation of John to the kingdom of God.<sup>1</sup>

Doubtless grave difficulty is encountered when we endeavour to blend the literal truth of the tradition

<sup>1</sup> In the earliest times the great ecclesiastical writers differed in their estimate of the significance of the message from the prison. Tertullian [*adv. Marc.* iv. 18, *A.-N. L.* vol. iv. p. 246] accounts for it by the departure from John of the prophetic gift of the Holy Spirit. Origen, *Hom.* xxviii. on Luke vii.; Chrys. *Hom.* Matt. xi.; Augustine, *Sermo de verbo*, take a different view. Maldonatus, Matt. xi., eagerly maintains the position that John simply sought on behalf of disbelieving disciples the confirmation which the words of Jesus alone could give. This view has been recently sustained with great eloquence by Stier, *Words of the Lord Jesus*, vol. ii. pp. 59-130. Strauss ascribed unusual credibility to the synoptic narrative of the message, making it to be the one genuine indication of the relation of John to Jesus. See Keim, l. c. ii. 355.



as preserved by the synoptic narrative with the historic character of the closing testimonies of John to Jesus as preserved by the fourth Evangelist. If John the Baptist had recognised in our Lord the Eternal Son of God, the Divine Lamb, and the Heavenly Bridegroom, is it possible to believe that he could, within a few months, question whether Jesus was the Christ; and that he should, with a simple desire for information, have asked, "Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?"

The difficulty is in some respects augmented by the circumstance that the language of Christ in reply to this extraordinary request does not justify our supposing that John had changed his judgment, or even wavered in his convictions. Jesus on this occasion claimed for him the dignity of a Hebrew prophet, and even more than this, a lofty official position, that of being His forerunner, the Elijah who fulfilled in his own person the predictions of the ancient seers. These and other words of still stronger approbation fell from the lips of Jesus, revealing no sense of disappointment or chagrin. We are bound, therefore, to presume that they were in harmony with the knowledge of the position that had been taken by John up to the time of his imprisonment.

It has been said that incarceration in Machærus had soured his temper or broken his spirit, that he expected, at the hands of Jesus, a miraculous deliverance from his persecutors, and that his confidence in the reality of the mission of Jesus wavered when the gloomy days rolled by without a rescue. But this supposition is incompatible with all that we have seen of the moral fibre of the Baptist. While we must admit that Elijah succumbed for a moment before the furious animosity



of Jezebel, yet prisons and prophets are far from being strangers to each other. The spirit of a martyr, the self-repression of an ascetic, the dogged obstinacy of a Nazarite, and a Hebrew prophet's sublime carelessness of reputation or personal comfort, were not likely to be utterly sapped by the air of a dungeon, in which, as we incidentally find, John was not even debarred from the society of his disciples.

Other explanations of John's inquiry have turned on the parallel it affords with the spiritual doubts of Christian believers, with the gloomy clouds which darken the experience of the children of light, with the hiding of the Father's face from those that have been walking in love, with the terrible temptations of God's saints. But the denial of Peter, the flesh-thorn of Paul, the recantations at the stake, and the fierce conflicts undergone by such men of God as Augustine and Benedict, Luther and Cranmer, Fox and Bunyan, will not help us to unriddle the mystery; for no word of reproof, but rather a calm summary of the entire Johannine position, forms the substance of our Lord's reply to the question.

We are compelled to ask whether the Johannine testimonies, including those recorded in the fourth Gospel, do without doubt recognize in Jesus the final and completed manifestation of *all* that John had himself predicted. John was a prophet, looking on the present and the future with prophetic eyes. He therefore blended in one dazzling but perspectiveless picture, the whole of the hope of his people—the kingdom, the righteousness, the wrath, the Mighty One, the Baptizer with the Holy Ghost, the Son of God, the Lamb of God, the Bridegroom of the true Israel. But



with all this, we gather even from *the fourth Gospel* that John retained his independent position. Months of profound interest to the establishment of the kingdom elapsed, and John made no sign. His ideas were vivid and his enthusiasm boundless. He prepared others to recognize the high functions of Jesus. He pointed them to Him, but did not enrol himself among His adherents. It must be admitted that the full details of the picture drawn by John were but partially realized by the Lord Jesus, and John's idea of the Christ was to some extent revolutionized, or blended with new elements, which had only partially coalesced with it. The composite notion of Messiah given by the prophets had suggested to Jewish writers a double Christ, and His anticipated personality had been often vague and featureless. Until the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus had taken place, until the descent of the Spirit as His personal gift, until in fact He came again on Pentecost, and baptized with fire, until He came and smote the land with the curse, subjected Israel, its nation and its temple, to a new and more rigorous test, and erected the spiritual temple of His body on the ruins of the system which prepared the possibility of His appearance; until all this was realized, John's prophecies were not completely fulfilled. He may, nay, he must have had ideas of the COMING ONE which Jesus had as yet not realized. There is nothing therefore unworthy of John's character, nothing incompatible with John's testimonies, in the supposition that he did not see the whole of his ideal embodied in the ministry of Jesus.

We are too apt to put together our ideas of a coming Messiah, and to suppose them in their in-



ception to have been more sharply definite, individualized, centralized, and personal than they really were. The Messianic idea was obviously as complex in John's day as the millennial idea is at this moment. It was made up of many parts and manifestations, of political and ecclesiastical elements, of physical and spiritual transformations, of angelic and Divine revelations. John may have been perfectly, prophetically convinced that Jesus was the commencement of the sublime series of changes, and may have been eager to see Him accomplish the whole process of which he had spoken; and yet he may have been in doubt whether Jesus was or was not the completion of the series, whether or no there was a manifestation of another kind [*ἕτερον προσδοκῶμεν*],<sup>1</sup> which would complete the Messianic hope. If so, the inquiry was justifiable and reasonable. The Church, the kingdom, as it then existed, did rightfully expect more at the hands of its King. A wondrous succession of events practically answered John's question. Our Lord's reply to the *two* disciples<sup>2</sup> was an admission that the full evidence of His being the COMING ONE awaited the unfolding of Providence. Our Lord was reticent (save on one or two

<sup>1</sup> Dean Milman went a step too far when he wrote: "It is assumed without warrant that John himself must have had a distinct or definite notion of the Messiahship of Jesus; he may have applied some of the prophetic or popular sayings supposed to have reference to the Messiah, without any precise notion of their meaning; and his conception of the Messiah's character, and of Jesus Himself, may have varied during different passages of his own life." I think, however, he is right when he says, "If the whole had been more distinct and systematic it would be more liable to suspicion." Milman, *Hist. of Christianity*, vol. i. p. 142.

<sup>2</sup> Whether *διὰ* or *δύο* be the true reading, we cannot save the consistency of John at the expense of his straightforwardness, by throwing the doubt upon the head of his disciples. If *διὰ* be the reading it is decisive, and our Lord's words, "Go and tell John," show that He took the inquiry and treated it as proceeding from John the Baptist himself. Tregelles and Tischendorf (8th ed.) read *δύο* in Matt. xi. 2.



remarkable occasions) with regard to His Messianic claims. He aimed at purifying the entire conception from its political concomitants. He did not reject the title of "Son of David," but He refused the political leadership which His excited followers would have thrust upon Him, and allowed that the supreme evidences of His loftiest functions lay still in the future. "What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend to where he was before?" "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men to me." "Except ye eat my flesh and drink my blood, ye have no life in you." In answer to the high priest, He admitted that He was the Christ, but He added, "Henceforth ye shall see the Son of man seated on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." These were elements of the "Coming One" which were clearly a part of that type of Messiah which entered into John's predictions, and he was specially tempted or moved to ask, "Art Thou the Coming One, or must we expect another of a different kind from Thyself, to fulfil the large hope that is throbbing in the heart of Israel?"

John heard in the prison the works of Christ. It is singular that the word "Christ" is used here absolutely of our Lord. The rarity of this usage by the Evangelists suggests that the healing powers of Jesus had been detailed to John as proof of His Messiahship. The reply of our Lord is a repetition of the kind of evidence already referred to, and then He added: "Go and show John again the things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached unto them; and blessed is he whosoever is not offended in ME." He



does not even now say, "I am the Coming One." He suggests, however, that the social and moral breadth of the kingdom, as conceived of and as developing itself around Him, and that the Divine forces being wielded by Him for the deliverance of the diseased and even raising of the dead, ought to satisfy John that his visions are all in the course of accomplishment.

John personally needed this teaching and this assurance as a complement to that which he acquired from his own penetrative glances. There is no reason to deny, with Keim, the literal truth of the appeal to the miraculous healings; but in effect the Lord did say, "Tell John that I am revealing my power to take away the sins of the world, to bear the sicknesses and infirmities of mankind, that I am baptizing with the Holy Ghost, that I possess a spiritual might which can face all the power of the enemy, can cast out the devil, cleanse the moral leper, make glad the broken heart, proclaim good tidings to the poor, and that I am treating the whole house of Israel as my bride, on whom I lavish all my love." The answer of Jesus is undoubtedly more adapted to realize John's idea of Messiah as it is exhibited in the fourth Gospel, than to fulfil the conception of One whose wrath would flame out against sin, and burn up the worthless with unquenchable fire.

It is possible that the closing words of the message of the Lord Jesus to the Baptist imply that some offence had been taken by John at the continued reticence and quiet demeanour of our Lord. "Blessed is he whosoever is not offended in me." Does John fail to secure this blessedness? Does he abide so obstinately in the dazzling light of his own prophetic



intuitions, that he cannot blend them into one personality, and is he still abroad in his identification of the entire Christ? It has been suggested that John took a position similar to that of the Lord's own mother, who while she knew that it was He who had come to redeem His people, to cast down the mighty from their seat, to scatter the proud, and to fulfil the promises made to their fathers, yet failed to understand that the hour of His full manifestation had not arrived. It has been said that John, like others, wished to force upon the Lord a more public avowal of His claims, to obtain a confession from the lips of Jesus which should satisfy waverers and confirm with *His own* authority the popular impression of His Messiahship. The language of our Lord to the multitude after the departure of John's disciples leaves no doubt as to the significance of the entire Johannine dispensation, and in my opinion solves the problem.

First, there is vindicated for John a lofty personal character, an unwavering integrity. The people who went out into the wilderness did not expect to find a reed shaken with the wind, nor did they do so. Circumstances, changes of public feeling, would not be likely to modify his message. Winds of doctrine would not shake his constancy. From the ground he took in the first weeks of his ministry he never swerved.<sup>1</sup> The Lord reminds His audience, in addition, that they had not expected to find in the wilderness the royal courtier, the gentle, smooth-tongued, softly-dressed time-server. It was not in a palace but a

<sup>1</sup> Grotius, Wettstein, Baumgarten, Crusius, De Wette, think that this first question was a simple literal inquiry as to objects that might have arrested their attention in the wilderness. Stier, Meyer, Olshausen, justly regard this as utterly meaningless.



desert that he had gathered his disciples. They had heard of the solemn apparition which brought to mind the terrible form of Elijah, the destroyer of idolaters, the man who wielded the fire of heaven, who wore the garment of hair, and threatened with punishment every form of trespass and all the spirit of sin; who summoned men to penitence, to sacrifice, to righteousness.

Secondly, our Lord gives to John all his official grandeur. "He is a prophet." "Yea, I say unto you, more than a prophet." "Among them that are born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist." Moral force and official dignity are separately specified as the elements of his greatness. He has occupied a unique position in the development of the Divine purpose. He is the last and greatest of all the prophetic company. He is foreshadowed as a second Elijah, to prepare the way of the Lord. He has declared the kingdom of God to be at hand.

Thirdly, our Lord explicitly declares, with reference not merely to this inquiry, but to the entire position of John, that he has not entered the kingdom. "He that is least in the kingdom of heaven (or of God: *Luke*) is greater than he."<sup>1</sup>

I have already referred frequently to this Divine canon by which the Johannine position was interpreted, and have applied it in a thorough-going manner to the various elements of John's official character and teaching; so that it is unnecessary here to do more than record the confirmation of this Divine judgment

<sup>1</sup> The effort to make ὁ μικρότερος ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τῶν οὐρανῶν to be Christ's own description of Himself, though it was the interpretation of Chrysostom, Euthymius, Cornelius a Lapide, Luther, and Fleck, *De Regno Divino*, p. 83, is rejected by almost every modern interpreter, Calvin, Beza, Gerhard, Maldonatus, Grotius, Bengel, Stier, De Wette, Meyer, Van Röhde, Alford.



derivable from the peculiar circumstances in which the words were uttered. John had undergone no moral or official deterioration by his imprisonment. Though he had seen so much of the kingdom, he had always missed its deepest significance. Its tenderness for sorrow and weakness, and its pity for darkness and death, was the very thing which induced him to say, "Do we look for another?" Can this be the Lord in His majesty? Is this the Spirit that will burn up the enemies of the Lord? Is this the fire that will baptize the true Israel? He had discerned in Jesus the Divine Lamb, the Sin-bearer, the Son of God, the Servant of Jehovah, the Bridegroom of the daughter of Israel; but where was the Great King? the Lord in His glory? the Judge of all the earth? the great and terrible day of the Lord?

The fact, as Christ declared it, was that the least in the kingdom, the children of the bridechamber, they who had begun to offer in sacrifice a priestly consecration of their own life to the Lord, were greater than the greatest of the Old Testament *priests*. They who had found out the real significance of prayer to the Father and fasting to the Lord, because of the keenness of their spiritual hunger, were "greater" than the most vigorous *ascetic*, the loneliest recluse of Mount Horeb, who in all the bravery of unkempt hair, or all the mystery of self-abnegation, was setting an example of the higher life. They who had faith in the gift of eternal life [consciously revealed to them in the manifestation of the Son of God] were "greater" than any official *prophet*. Such indeed had become members of a "goodly fellowship of prophets," who were witnesses of that for which prophets and



righteous men had waited in vain ; but those who were or should be baptized with the Spirit of God, were "greater" than even he that baptized with water.

Our Lord continued : " All the prophets and the law prophesied until John." They had all anticipated the kingdom. They saw it in dim representation and imperfect realization. The LAW drew its outline, prefigured its institutions. The Law revealed the corruption of human nature,<sup>1</sup> and provoked that corruption into violent activity. When the commandment came, sin revived.<sup>2</sup> The law was added for the sake of transgressions.<sup>3</sup> It made sin exceeding sinful ;<sup>4</sup> and John reasserted the law with all its condemning force, and delivered thereby his prophetic burden. He summed up, moreover, and reaffirmed the visions of all the prophets—the visions of the King and of the Lamb,—he was the Moses and the Elijah in one. John had declared the advent of the kingdom. From the earliest days of his ministry to the hour when Jesus spoke, the excitement had been intense. Men had sought to establish the kingdom by forcible means. The kingdom suffered violence, and they who would use temporal and physical force to set it up had done their utmost. Some would have compelled the Lord to put His supernatural energy at the disposal of their selfish patriotism, or local jealousy. They would have come by force and made Him a king, they would have compelled Him to manifest Himself to the world, and to restore the kingdom to Israel. He had Himself been tempted by the DEVIL to do these very things. The multitudes who crowded about Him were eager for the establishment of the vain

<sup>1</sup> Rom. iii. 19.    <sup>2</sup> Ibid. iv. 15 ; vii. 7-9.    <sup>3</sup> Gal. iii. 19.    <sup>4</sup> Rom. vii. 13.



carnal ideal of a kingdom of heaven. Violent measures, armed propaganda, secular motives and inducements would, if they could, have besieged the invisible battlements of the kingdom; and thus an endeavour had been made to take possession of it by unlawful means. The violent (*βιασταὶ*) were all who were, with partial understanding of its spiritual character, seeking to take forcible possession of the kingdom (*ἀπράξουσι*). But our Lord did not justify this method of realizing an age-long dream.

Often since the day when the Lord lamented the abuse of the Johannine dispensation, the Christian Church has fallen back on "the beggarly elements" of force to do the work of the Spirit. Enthusiastic princes have compelled men to believe the gospel of love at the point of the sword, and punished all recusancy by secular penalties. Hierarchies have found physical force ready to abet their stout conservatism and exclusiveness. Violent men have striven to enforce unanimity of spiritual conviction by gagging the outspoken dissident, and banning or burning the hopeless disbeliever. Intensity of religious feeling has often steeled the heart of man to all the pleadings of nature. The *βιασταὶ* are now not conspicuously armed with steel and fire, but there are many ways in which it is possible to crush the heart, "to stone men with hard words till they die," to exclude from fellowship, to force change of opinion by organised social persecution. All such "violence" proves how far the Church of Christ still is from a perfect conception of the breadth and fulness and charity of the mind of Jesus.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Many take another view of *βιασταὶ*. Neander, *Life of Christ*, E. T. p. 201, says: "These words are expressly chosen to denote the earnest will, the struggle, and the entire devotion of soul which are requisite to enter the king-



In St. Luke's account of this remarkable testimony we read :<sup>1</sup> " All the people when they heard this (*i. e.*, the declaration that the least in the kingdom of heaven was greater than John), and the publicans, justified God, having been baptized with the baptism of John, but the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, not being baptized by him." The thirty-first verse appears to resume the discourse (with οὖν), making it turn upon the contrast thus indicated between the conduct of the Pharisees and the publicans. On another occasion,<sup>2</sup> when the Pharisees derided our Lord's condemnation of covetousness, He assured them that they were judging themselves by human standards rather than by the Divine law, and that *that* which some men regarded as lofty excellence was abomination before God : and He continued, " The law and prophets were<sup>3</sup> until John." From that time (ἀπὸ τότε), from the commencement of John's ministry, the glad news of the kingdom of God has been proclaimed, and every one is violently pressing into it. (πᾶς εἰς αὐτὴν βιάζεται.) This seems nearly equivalent to the declaration, " The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent (βιασταὶ) take it by force."

The question arises, Does this treatment of the king-

dom of heaven. . . The worldly notions of the Messiahship had to be struggled against. The nature of the case shows that βιάζειν is to be thus taken, the *usus loquendi* does not contradict it." Lightfoot, Schneckenburger, Hilgenfeld, explain the passage of the hostility and persecution with which the Messiah-kingdom was pursued. Meyer considers that the " violence " is used in a good sense, and has no reference to the *sealot* fury or party. Baur thinks, in accordance with his perverse theory of the composition of the Gospels, that there is here an Anti-Pauline manifesto put into the lips of our Lord.

<sup>1</sup> Luke vii. 29, 30.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. xvi. 14-16.

<sup>3</sup> Or prophesied. ἐπροφήτευσαν, only sustained by D, is rejected by Tischendorf.



dom imply a reception or a rejection of the ministry of John? Clearly it was independent of the personal treatment accorded to John. Those who were violently endeavouring to establish or take possession of the kingdom had given a most imperfect attention to the message of the Baptist. The Pharisees and lawyers had rejected the counsel of God, they had come to his baptism, they had gone into the wilderness to see him, but John had scared them back with his terrible cry, "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the coming wrath?" They had retired from him confounded, when their deputation had heard his enigmatical utterance concerning the extraordinary functions he had assigned to himself. Though all men, *i.e.*, the bulk of the people, had recognized his prophetic career, "counted him for a prophet indeed," the Sanhedrists (high priests, elders, and scribes, most probably of the sect of the Pharisees) were unable to answer our Lord's inquiry, "whether the baptism of John was from heaven or of men," *i.e.*, was justified by a Divine commission or not.<sup>1</sup> The reason of their silence is given by the Evangelists. They reasoned *among* themselves (Luke), *in* themselves (Mark), "If we shall say, 'from heaven;' he will say, Why did ye not believe on him? If we shall say, 'from men,'"—they feared the people, and the popular verdict touching John's prophetic mission,—"all the people will stone us, for they have been persuaded that John was a prophet."<sup>2</sup> It thus is clear from three distinct declarations of our Lord that a large proportion of the religious and ruling classes, the cultivated and ceremonious Pharisees and scribes and lawyers, must

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxi. 23-27; Mark xi. 27-33; Luke xx. 1-8.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. xx. 6.



have repudiated the lofty claims of John. Although they inquired into <sup>1</sup> these claims, came to his baptism,<sup>2</sup> associated and sympathized with his disciples,<sup>3</sup> they were *not* baptized of him.<sup>4</sup> They were affected by his prophetic summons, they believed in the gospel of the kingdom, but they misapplied the message. They tried to take the kingdom by force. Repentance, righteousness, baptism with fire and with the Holy Ghost, as conditions of the privileges of the kingdom, were tests too severe for them. The severity of John's demeanour, the sacrifices he imposed, the testimony he bore to Jesus, were all too great a trial of their faith. They "rejected the counsel of God against themselves." Their language with reference to the austere Elias was, "He hath a dæmon." They could neither accept him nor his baptism; could not say whether his mission was Divine, human, or diabolic. "John came to them in the way of righteousness, and they believed *not*." They were as the son in the parable, who said, "I go, sir, and went not." They were summoned to holy service, they professed some interest in the mission of the great prophet; but the moral test was repudiated. The demands for spiritual reformation were unheeded by them. The only practical consequence of the ministry of John evinced, in the behaviour of Pharisees, lawyers, priests, and scribes, was their endeavour by physical and political means to govern the development of that kingdom of God which John had promised them. As a body, or class, they rejected him, but the "publicans and the harlots," the moral offscouring of the earth,

<sup>1</sup> John i. 19, 24.<sup>2</sup> Matt. iii. 7.<sup>3</sup> John iii. 25; iv. 1; Mark ii. 18; Matt. ix. 14.<sup>4</sup> Luke vii. 30.



had received the message of John, had been broken into penitence, had accepted the standard he had propounded, had submitted to his baptism, and recognized the righteousness of God, "the counsel of God," the judgment of heaven, alike in his warnings and promises, in the curses with which he threatened them, and the hope he held out of pardon and acceptance with God, as well as of the baptism with the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, "Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not; but the publicans and harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterwards, that ye might believe him."<sup>1</sup> This representation of the effect of John's teaching upon the publicans and harlots seems at first sight somewhat inconsistent with the language used by our Lord on the occasion of the message from the prison. On that occasion Jesus contrasted the receptions severally accorded to John the Baptist and to the Son of man by the men of that generation. He represented them as fractious, unwilling to be won by either form of the Divine message. The message and mission of John were rejected because they could not bear his stern self-restraint. On the other hand, the Son of man has shown the heavenly life in the midst of the earthly, has taken His place at the table of the Pharisee, and at the feast in the house of the publican; and they say, "Behold a man, gluttonous and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners."

Now the publicans and sinners who "repented at

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxi. 31, 32.



the preaching of John" would not be likely to charge upon the Son of man the heinous crime of being their "friend." They "justified God," and accepted the Lord's verdict on the nature of the kingdom, and the relation which John had occupied towards it. Matthew the publican, who recorded both of these discourses, and also the significant and divinely-interpreted parable of the two sons, was probably one who had been strongly moved to penitence and restitution by the thunder-peals of John, but who had found the Lord Jesus ready to answer the cry of his sinful but awakened nature. These broken-hearted, hated, persecuted men had received the message of the Lord as well as that of His forerunner. They were entering the kingdom of God before the Pharisee, and the lawyer, and the chief priest, and there may have been a secondary sense in which they too were taking the kingdom by storm.

A remarkable confirmation of the attitude held by the people towards John is found in the fourth Gospel.<sup>1</sup> The language of Jesus there recorded belongs to the same period of our Lord's ministry. Certainly John's public career had closed when the Lord enumerated the testimonies by which the Jews should have been convinced of His own Divine mission. Here, as in the synoptic narrative, Jesus rebuked the treatment which John received at the hands of a fickle multitude, admitted the value of the testimony of John, expressed grief at the feeble impression it had left behind it upon the leaders of popular thought, and emphatically proclaimed His own independence of the testimony of John. The chief commentators of early and modern times agree in thinking that the "other"

<sup>1</sup> John v. 31-36.



testimony concerning Himself which He knows to be true, is that of the Father.<sup>1</sup> To this He subsequently reverts with varied exposition, but He pauses a moment to speak not of a continued witness, but of one which had reached its highest expression. "Ye have sent unto John, and he hath borne witness unto the truth," *i. e.*, his language concerning me was a witness to the truth about me. As we read afterwards, "All things that John spake concerning this man were true."<sup>2</sup> "Still," said Jesus, "I receive not testimony from man."<sup>3</sup> For the highest purposes of my Messianic function and claim, I am not dependent on human testimony. The Father Himself, His inworking and co-working, His word and His direct manifestation of His will are all-sufficient. Thus Christ's independence of the Johannine mission is boldly proclaimed in the fourth Gospel, which nevertheless contains undoubtedly the most express and spiritual utterances lavished by John on his most susceptible disciples. This statement must be allowed its full weight when we are contrasting "the John of the fourth Gospel" with the representations of the Synop- tists. Still our Lord rebukes all disregard of the mes- sage of John. "I say these things that ye might be saved." As far as you are concerned, it would have been well for you to have received his testimony, and thus to have been fitted for the life and light and grace of the true kingdom. "He was the lamp, the torch kindled

<sup>1</sup> Cyril, Augustine, Bengel, Lücke, Tholuck, Olshausen, Lange, Meyer, Alford, Godet; in opposition to Chrysostom, Erasmus, Grotius, De Wette, and Ewald.

<sup>2</sup> John x. 41.

<sup>3</sup> In chap. iii. 11, 32, the phrase *λαμβάνω τὴν μαρτυρίαν* is used of reception or acceptance of testimony as proof. B. Crusius, Beza, Grotius, De Wette, take it to mean, "I do not seize hold of it;" and Tholuck, "I reject it," which is too strong. Meyer is content with saying, "Jesus will gar kein menschliches Zeugniß in dieser Verhandlung für sich gelten lassen, er weist es von sich."



and shining.” Perhaps there is a reference to Ecclus. xlviii. 1: “Then stood up Elijah the prophet like a fire, and his word burned like a lamp.”<sup>1</sup> This is just conceivable, if, as is easily shown, ideas of this nature with reference to Elijah were current in the popular speech. I do not think that our Lord’s having quoted from the Apocrypha is the explanation of the definite article, as the “quotation” is not sufficiently exact to have justified this.<sup>2</sup> The article is explained by a reference to “the lamp,” by pre-eminence, which was needed to prepare the people for their Lord, to light the bridal party to the home of the Bridegroom, to break in upon the moral darkness and apathy of the age. The *lamp* (λύχνος) was not the *light* of the world. He was not “that light,” as the Evangelist says, but he was a lamp kindled by the great Light-giver, by Him whose life was the light that lighteth every man, and who has come into the world.<sup>3</sup> “He was the lamp kindled and shining, and ye were willing (πρὸς ὥραν) for a while to rejoice (ἀγαλλιασθῆναι), to exult in his light. It was but for a season; when he called you to his baptism, and proclaimed the advent of the kingdom, you exulted—as summer flies that dance round a midnight torch. When he called you to repentance, when you saw the severe and terrible side of his ministry, you said, ‘He hath a devil, and is mad.’ You did not believe either his proclamation of the law-sanctions or his testimony about Me.”

This is in harmony with the solemn judgment on the Johannine dispensation, on which I have just commented, and there follows this remarkable saying of

A suggestion made by Bengel, followed by Stier and Alford.

<sup>1</sup> Lücke, Meyer.

<sup>3</sup> John i. 8, 9.



Christ: "I have greater testimony than that of John, the works which the Father hath given me to finish bear witness of me that the Father hath sent me." These are the works of physical and moral healing, to which our Lord called John's own attention, as the true answer to his mysterious question. The proof that the Father had sent Him was the unveiling of the Father's heart rather than the baring of Jehovah's sword. It was in the gift of the Holy Spirit, rather than in any political convulsion of Palestine, or the smiting of the earth with a curse. "The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached unto them." The works of mercy and sacrifice that the Father had given Him to finish would be a greater testimony that the Father had sent Him than was the entire public ministry of John.

John prepared the way of the Lord, but he did not fully know the Lord. John came to bear witness to the light, that all men through Him might believe, but there was grander testimony still in the Voice from heaven. He was the harbinger of the morning, glowing with reflected lustre, which was lost in the bright shining of the Day-spring. He baptized with water unto repentance, saying that they should believe on Him who should come after him, but he did not see in Jesus *all* he had anticipated as the Christ. He knew that Jesus was the Lamb of Isaiah's prophecy passing through a strange agony of temptation to His Messianic throne, but he did not see how thus the Lamb was to divide His portion with the strong. When the marriage feast was graced by His miracle, John was confounded, and said, "He must increase, I must de-



crease;" but still he urged fasting, and liturgies, and baptisms, and reiterated the stern and ancient cry, "This do and ye shall live." He bore witness to the *fact* of the kingdom, to *one* side of its manifestation, to a portion of the truth, to the coming of the Christ, to the Messiahship of Jesus, up to the extent of his inspirations; but Christ had "greater testimony than that of John," for "he that was least in the kingdom of God was greater than he."

We can never know the effect of the language of Jesus upon the imprisoned prophet. It is moreover difficult to estimate the length of time during which he lingered in prison. If we compare Matt. xiv. 13 with the parallel passages, and with John vi. 4, it would seem that the Passover which preceded that at which our Lord suffered, followed rapidly after the death of John, and consequently that his imprisonment, which commenced shortly after the first Passover of our Lord's ministry, must have lasted from eight to twenty months, according as we regard the feast of the Jews mentioned in John v. 1 as a Passover or not. At all events a considerable portion of our Lord's ministry, including a visit to Jerusalem,<sup>1</sup> and the consequent and growing malice on the part of the Pharisees, with discourses, journeys, and special ministrations of our Lord, must have intervened between the *mention* of John's imprisonment and the *mention* of his death. On the supposition that the feast mentioned in the fifth of John was that of Purim, we have already seen that the Passover described as ἑγγύς in John vi. 4 must be the second of our Lord's ministry, and that one year has elapsed since the cleansing of the temple and indications of the still

<sup>1</sup> John v.



active ministry of John. The miracle of the multiplication of the loaves was closely synchronous with the trial mission of the twelve apostles, an event which led incidentally to the revelation of Herod's superstitions and remorseful anxiety. Wieseler supposes that the journey from Judæa to Galilee, which the synoptic narrative associates with the imprisonment of the Baptist, was that which is implicitly referred to in John vi. 1. This theory involves a prolongation of the ministry of John, and a very brief imprisonment. It is beset with other difficulties, on which I have commented elsewhere.<sup>1</sup>

While Pharisees were discussing the relative claims of John and Jesus, and while publicans melted and terrified by the fear of judgment were pressing into the kingdom of God before them, the great enemy of John was plotting his speedy death. Herodias resolved to free herself from the fearful possibility of Herod's yielding to his stern censor's rebuke.<sup>2</sup> The fears of Herod, and his partial reverence for the prisoner, shielded John for a few months from the inveterate malice of his wife. But the time came when he must make public his marriage with Herodias, and the high probability is that he proposed to do so by a great banquet at Machærus.

With not unnatural fondness for the stronghold which must have been very recently recovered from his insulted father-in-law, he lusted for the sight of his prize. He had, therefore, on the occasion of his birthday,<sup>3</sup> summoned to Machærus a gathering of the gran-

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A.

<sup>2</sup> ἐνεῖχεν αὐτῷ, Mark vi. 19. The word only occurs here and Luke xi. 53.

<sup>3</sup> τὰ γενέσια is a word originally used of the offerings presented on anniversaries of the birthdays of the dead. τὰ γενέθλια is more frequently used to



dees, the military commanders, and leading men of Galilee.<sup>1</sup> Such a gathering boded no good to the imprisoned prophet. Herodias and her daughter Salome, with their suite, must have accompanied the royal *cortége*. The vulture was swooping on her prey. Herodias hoped in an hour of weakness to gain from the licentious passions of her husband what she had hitherto failed to extort from his fear or his indignation. She was mad with vexation at the idea of being so near to the bold fanatic who had appealed to Jewish law and universal conscience against her adultery, and had thus imperilled her crown. She schooled Salome in the part she was to play. The wickedness, spite, and extravagant indecency of the proceeding that followed, can hardly be paralleled even in that age of cruelty and lust. To work upon the heated passions of her husband by the indecorous exhibition of her own daughter's charms, and thus to bribe him to utter a hasty promise which he would not be able to recall, was her deliberate and malicious intention. The daughter was prepared to ask, when the moment should arrive, for the life of the helpless prisoner of Machærus. As the procession wound up the mountain pass, with the bravery of nuptial banners and music, and while Roman officers with flashing armour

denote birthday festivities. Meyer says that there is no Greek example of the word *γενέσια* used for birthday. Passow refers to Philo and Josephus in vindication of N. T. usage. See also art. "Fünus," in *Dict. of Antiq.* Wieseler considers it the festival of his accession to the throne.

<sup>1</sup> *δεῖπνον ἐποίησεν τοῖς μεγιστᾶσι αὐτοῦ καὶ τοῖς χιλιάρχοις καὶ τοῖς πρώτοις τῆς Γαλιλαίας.* The word *μεγίσταυεις* was common in LXX., Josephus, and later writers. There were six *χιλιάρχοι*, literally, "captains or chiefs of a thousand men," with ten centurions under each, in the Roman legion. These chiliarchs were probably the leading military commanders of the then army of occupation, or of mercenaries in his pay. See, for the presence of such an officer in Jerusalem, John xviii. 2 ; Acts xxii. 26, 28 ; xxiii. 17, 22.



and plumed helmet rode as body-guard of the princesses, and all the grandees and wealthy lords of Galilee and Peræa were gathering from various approaches to this eagle's eyrie, and when the garrison stood forth and presented arms as the great nobles entered the gates, and the city crowd of many tribes—among them Greeks and Bedouins, white-robed Essenes and Oriental traffickers, priests and Levites from Jerusalem, and disciples of the prophet eager for his release—sent up their shout of welcome; accustomed as men in that age were to deeds of vengeance and blood, it could hardly have occurred to any that the veiled ladies of the court were revolving a murderous plot, as godless and foul as any that had already stained the annals of the house of Herod. The banquet is spread, and the tetrarch and his boon companions are merry over their cups. Many a rough jest at the expense of Philip and Aretas passes from lip to lip, and many shrewd suggestions are being made as to the defence of the invulnerable fortress. The music and the wine and the laughter are all at their height, and the sounds of the revelry reverberate through the marble corridors. Purple shadows of the mountain peaks are beginning to fall across the deep ravines, and to shroud the towers of the fortress in their gloom. The granddaughter of the murdered Mariamne, sister of Herod Agrippa, is in vehement consultation with a daughter who seems to have shared in the bloodthirsty passions of her mother,<sup>1</sup> and would be ready to urge the fulfilment of that mother's request, and to become herself

<sup>1</sup> Matthew expressly states that she was thoroughly primed by her mother. *ἡ δὲ προβιβασθεῖσα ὑπο τῆς μητρὸς αὐτῆς*. Mark tells us that consultation with the mother followed on Herod's preposterous offer, but he adds that she entered with eagerness into the plot, *εὐθίως μετὰ σπουδῆς*.



the bearer of the hideous proof of her malice and indecency. Clearly at her mother's suggestion she went into the banqueting hall, and played the revolting part of an *almeh*—"she danced before Herod and his guests."<sup>1</sup>

The kind of dancing is obviously that which disgraces the East to the present day.<sup>2</sup> Nothing but shamelessness or inveterate malice, or both combined, could have driven a princess of royal blood to practise such a profession before the assembled magnates and the Roman officers of the court of Herod. Herodias had calculated the result. A wild tumult of applause rings through the banqueting hall, and the tetrarch, maudlin with wine and excited passion, cries, "Ask what thou wilt, even to the half of my kingdom."<sup>3</sup> Her eye flashes fire and hate as she hisses out her murderous prayer, and clamours for the instant destruction of the grandest man living on the earth. "The head of John the Baptist on one of these golden dishes of your birthday banquet!" is her infernal demand. "Here, now, to-night, I ask you to redeem your promise." In hotter haste than Herodias herself, she seeks to clutch the ghastly trophy of her rage and spite. Even the tyrant is hushed and sobered now by the revelation of the nest of scorpions he has folded in his bosom. He is "sorry;"—at least he thinks the act impolitic. He is superstitious, and shrinks from coldblooded murder. He trembles for a moment between disgrace and fear, and then "for the oath's sake," and out of respect to the witnesses of the

<sup>1</sup> See art. *ὀρχησις*, *saltatio*, in Smith's *Dict. of Antiq.*

<sup>2</sup> The dancing at feasts was an excess of effeminacy and voluptuousness, and was condemned by Cicero when clearing the character of Deiotarus from such a charge. Even Tiberius and Domitian condemned the practice.

<sup>3</sup> The Oriental courts have other traditions of similar acts of tyrannical bounty. See Esther v. 3, 6, and vii. 2. See also, for a similar explosion of excited prodigality on the part of Xerxes, Herodotus, ix. 109.



riot and the pledge, who must have felt their own lives trembling in the balance, he is unwilling contumeliously to refuse her, and utters the military order which shall give effect to her fiendish design.<sup>1</sup> A grim horror darkens the scene. The music, the wine, and the dancing scarcely avail to keep off the ugly spectre of the avenging Elijah on his pyramid of skulls. Salome waits amid the din; waits till the deed is done—and bears in triumph to Herodias the bleeding token of her eternal shame.<sup>2</sup>

Tradition has augmented the horror of the synoptic narrative, and so we read in Jerome that Herodias was not yet satisfied with the success of her vile plot, but had the barbarity to prick with a bodkin, as Fulvia had done that of Cicero, the silenced tongue of the inflexible Preacher of Repentance.<sup>3</sup> The disciples of John were permitted to bury his body, and they “went and told Jesus.” Thus in the silence of his dungeon, without warning from his foes or consolation from his friends, was the great Baptist’s ministry and life brought to a tragic and ignominious end. He was brutally murdered as a consequence of the malice engendered by his faithful, fearless proclamation of the law of God.<sup>4</sup> “They did to the Elijah whatsoever they

<sup>1</sup> σπικουλάτωρα ἐπέταξεν.-σπεκ is found in Rabbinical Hebrew. It may mean (Passow) *speculator*, a body-guard, or prison-warder, or equal *spiculator*, one armed with a *spicula* (Schleusner, Alford, Meyer), whose special duty (Julius Firmicus) was the cutting off of convicts’ heads.

<sup>2</sup> See Livius xxxix. for the fury of Marius. Several of our modern German critics think that the whole transaction is dressed up with ornamental and mythical adornment in the evangelic narrative; but the indication given elsewhere that the wife of Herod’s steward, Chuza, was a disciple of Christ, makes it extremely probable that we have the report of an eye-witness to this event as well as to the subsequent remorse and anxiety of Herod.

<sup>3</sup> *Contra Rufin*, c. 11, quoted by Witsius; and Tillemont, *Mémoires*, tom. i. p. 105.

<sup>4</sup> Witsius quotes from *Chronicon Regum Templi Secundi*, fol. 54, words strongly resembling the fragment of Josippon, and similarly from a Hebrew



listed,"<sup>1</sup> said our Lord, "and likewise also shall the Son of man thus suffer from them." There was against the Baptist a combination of fierce and angry passions resembling that against Christ; yet with all his vehemence he had not wounded so many susceptibilities as Jesus had done, had not preferred claims that were so unpardonable in the eyes of Pharisaic or sacerdotal sanctity. He had bravely denounced folly, extortion, uncleanness, and hypocrisy, and he had made one implacable enemy. No judicial process affirmed his crime, no sacred court adjudicated upon his assumed violation of law, no Roman tribunal affirmed his innocence of the political charge brought before it. He fell, not in the face of day, but in the hour and power of darkness; not before all the people, but alone in his cell; certainly without many witnesses, and without leaving one further testimony on record, or one parting word either for the King for whose advent he yearned, or for the disciples who buried his corpse.

Keim attributes to the execution of John our Lord's departure to the extreme limits of Herod's dominions. On the contrary, though Jesus recognized the part which Pharisaic jealousy had taken in the sentiment which led to John's imprisonment and death, He exhibited a sovereign independence of the wishes or spite of Herod.<sup>2</sup> It seems, moreover, that not long after this

work entitled *Zemach*, part 1, A.D. 1770, the following translation: "Herodes Antipater quem nonnulli tetrarcham appellant fuit filius Herodis primi, et frater Archelai, fuitque rex tertius de familia Herodis. Etiam iste fuit impius pessimus, et vir perditus plurimos Sapientum Israelis occidit gladio, et accepit uxorem fratris sui Philippi, hoc adhuc vivente, sibi in uxorem. Jochanan vero Sacerdotem magnum, propterea quod ipsum redarguisset ob hoc facinus interemit gladio, cum plurimis ex Sapientibus Israelis."

<sup>1</sup> Mark ix. 13; Matt. xvii. 12. ἐποίησαν ἐν αὐτῷ (to Elias) ὅσα ἠθέλησαν, οὕτω καὶ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου μέλλει πάσχειν ὑπ' αὐτῶν. τότε συνῆκαν οἱ μαθηταὶ ὅτι περὶ Ἰωάννου τοῦ Βαπτιστοῦ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς. <sup>2</sup> Luke xiii. 31, 32.



tragic consummation of the Baptist's life, the Lord Jesus sent His twelve apostles in every direction, to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom, to heal disease, to command all men everywhere to repent. This gave great publicity to the name of Jesus. The general resemblance between the message of the Twelve and the earliest harangues of the Baptist cannot be overlooked. Their work was like his, a preparatory mission. They too prepared the way of the Lord. The deeper realities of the Lord's person and work could not as yet be proclaimed. Their preaching vividly recalled the thunder-peals of the Baptist, and the evidence of this resemblance appears in the manner in which the renown of Jesus is said to have been received at the court of Herod.<sup>1</sup> Matthew's report is the most simple: "Herod said to his servants, This is John the Baptist; he has been raised from the dead, and on this account the Powers are mightily working in him." Mark tells us, in addition, that many reports were circulating about Jesus: "Some said, He is Elias; others, He is a prophet, or one of the (old) prophets;" but when Herod heard the rumour, he cried (Sadducee though he was), "He whom I beheaded—John—the very man has been raised up." Luke gives us a modified and enlarged statement that Herod was in perplexity because it was said by certain persons that John had been raised from the dead. The other suppositions are also made known to the tetrarch, that "Elias has appeared; that a prophet (one of the ancient ones) has risen up. But Herod said, I beheaded John. Who is the man concerning whom I hear such things? and he sought to see him." So that,

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xiv. 1, 2; Mark vi. 14-16; Luke ix. 7-9.



according to Luke, Herod rather refutes than originates the idea of the resurrection of John. It is clear, from each Gospel, that a discussion took place in his presence, involving the possible revivification of John.

Hence there was prevailing the kind of remark and eager expectation out of which it was not unlikely that a mythical report of the resurrection of John might have arisen. A surmise was undoubtedly hazarded by some that he had broken the bands of death. It must have been by those who were ignorant of the previous relations between John and Jesus, and who were disciples neither of John nor of Jesus. The myth did not flourish, although there were strong inducements in the hearts of John's eager partizans to believe in his continued ministry, and to welcome such a vindication of his preternatural mission. The simple explanation is, that it was only a passing hallucination : it most probably arose in the breast of a superstitious and weak tyrant, struck with momentary remorse for his dark deed of blood, and it disappeared at once before the well-known facts of the case. John perished ; he was buried ; and his sepulchre soon became a sacred shrine to his followers. But the influence of his life-work did not die with him. The community which he founded reveals some traces of its existence even to the present day. Ideas prevailing before his time, and practices to which he lent the sanction of his great name, were readily associated with the grand memory of the Baptist, and with belief in him as the last and greatest of the prophets ; but the existence of this early rumour, the undoubted sublimity of his position, and the perpetuation of his personal influence, *did not avail to create a mythical legend of his resurrection,*



*nor did it expand itself into evidential details.* Even the rumour vanished. History tells us that he died a cruel death, that he fell as a martyr to truth and virtue. He was laid in his grave. After-generations did him reverence, but their subjective consciousness did not call him from his eternal repose, or see him seated in a human body at the right hand of power.

Here we have a striking note of divergence from the career of the Lord and Head of the Christian Church, to which modern criticism might, with advantage, take heed.

The external resemblance between our Lord and John was in many respects so great, that those who looked at both from a distance could confound them with each other, and actually imagine the one to be a metempsychosis of the other; but the real relation between them is of a profoundly different order. They were alike lofty and sublime expressions of the Old Covenant; they presented, in living and expressive form, its highest teachings and its deepest spirit. John was indeed the last flower on the gorgeous but long-barren stock of Judaism, but he represented rather the falling and perishable petals of the flower, which, in dying, fulfilled its course; while Christ was the rich and pregnant seed of the kingdom of God, which, though it might itself fall to the earth and die, yet in dying would bring forth much fruit.

They were both priests unto God; and more than this, they alike offered up themselves as a sacrifice to the holy Will of God. But the death of John was the abrupt close of a ministry that might have been singularly beneficial to mankind, and which, humanly speaking, would if prolonged have exercised a mighty



influence on the full manifestation to his generation of the Eternal Light. His imprisonment and death cut short his true work. On the other hand, the death of Christ was the climax and completion of an earthly ministry, was a chief purpose of His human service; occurs as a sublime event in a perfect and endless life, and provides the fearful prelude to His more glorious and effective ministry as the great High Priest of our profession. The mission of John acquires a tragic interest from its melancholy end; but no doctrine that he taught was made more obvious, no position that he took became more significant, no influence that he exerted on his nation or on mankind was augmented by that death. We may learn from his fate the danger of honesty, the perils of moral courage, the sublimity of the quiet endurance of wrong. When he hesitated and questioned Divine Providence, and interrogated Jesus from his prison, he was thinking more of his nation than of himself. We hear of no exceeding sorrow, no mighty cry of anguish, no sweat of blood, no covenant made in his death. "Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?" is the last and only murmur that escapes from the cloud that enwrapped him. He was grand in his simplicity; he was "more than a prophet." His austere life recommended abstinence and mortification. His burning words proclaimed the coming of a day of wrath and a kingdom of righteousness; but his words were not made more energetic, and his legacy to Israel did not become one whit more significant, either by the fact or the method of his death. On the other hand, the death of Christ was, from the first, a foreseen purpose, an anticipated work, a baptism that He yearned for. It was the sign that He would give of His right to cleanse the



temple; the proof to Israel that He was the Good Shepherd; the mode in which He should fulfil all righteousness and all prophecy; the most expressive utterance of the love and justice of His Father; the indispensable condition in His ransom of the world. But if the record of *Christ's* life had ended as did that of Peter's or Paul's or John's, and we had received from His contemporaries only the memory of the perfect beauty of His character, the creative originality of His teaching, together with the chronicle of His miraculous healings, and the portraiture of His holy gentleness and His sublime fervour and passion of piety—even if the record had told us more than this, and led us to believe that He spake of a God-consciousness unique in the history of human thought and literature; and if then and there the record and the portraiture had terminated abruptly, it is certain that the most essential consideration towards comprehending Christ would have been absent. His power over mankind might have been signal and memorable, but it would have been deprived of almost all that gives it enduring influence. His promises would have had no realization, His discourses would have lost the chief key to their interpretation, and His hold on the human heart would never have been a factor in the evolution of humanity.







## LECTURE VIII.

*RESULTS, ECHOES, AND LESSONS OF THE  
MINISTRY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST.*







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### RESULTS, ECHOES, AND LESSONS OF THE MINISTRY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST.

THE last of the prophets is cut off in the prime of his early manhood. His “sun is gone down while it is yet day ;” but a luminous spectrum lingers for a while in the atmosphere of Judaism, and casts a side light upon the significance and progress of the kingdom of God. The memory of the murder in the castle of Machærus haunted the tetrarch, and brooded over the banqueting halls of Tiberias and Sepphoris. The courtiers of Herod knew his superstitious fears. The common people anticipated Divine retribution for the crime. Josephus, referring to the destruction of Herod’s army by Aretas—an event which occurred nine years after the death of John—adds, it was “utterly destroyed by GOD, who thereby very justly punished and chastised him by way of retribution for JOHN, called the BAPTIST.” Thus the echoes of the crime still sounded in the ears of the populace, and the belief in John’s moral grandeur, and in the Divine approval of his mission, was at the date of Herod’s reverse of fortune sufficiently strong to have attracted the notice of Josephus. The conflict between Herod and Aretas originated in the indignity offered by the



former to the daughter of the Arabian king. The people never forgot that John had denounced Herod's treatment of his wife and his marriage with Herodias and when the final issues of hostilities which had thus commenced, proved utter ruin to Herod's army, they remembered the word of the Lord by His servant John. Lofty authority condemns any such interpretations of the Divine Providence which rules over men and nations, but the fact remains. This opinion on the part of the people—whether rightly or wrongly entertained—is a remarkable testimony to the effect of the Baptist's ministry upon contemporary life.

A more impressive fact is the repeated proof furnished by the New Testament that our Lord and His apostles regarded the message and ministry of John as a Divine preparation for the Dispensation of the Holy Ghost. I have already referred to the undoubted implication of our Lord that "the baptism of John" was "from heaven;" and the solemn assurance given by Christ to the people, that if they had accepted John's mission, they would have been morally bound to admit His own claims. The same tone pervades the last word spoken on earth by our Lord: "John baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence."<sup>1</sup> These words imply that the disciples had been baptized with *water* by John, and therefore that the nucleus of the Christian community had originated in the work of the great forerunner. This is confirmed by other considerations. Peter undoubtedly follows the same connection of ideas in his sermon on the day of Pentecost. The tenor of his discourse is: "The Holy One has been exalted to the right hand of

<sup>1</sup> Acts i. 5.



power. He has shed forth this great spiritual manifestation which ye now see and hear. Repent, and be baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus unto the remission of sins, and ye also shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

It is not necessary to suppose that among the thousands who submitted to baptism, there were many who would undergo the ordinance a second time. A vast host of proselytes from every country under heaven were present. The grand event took place far away from the scenes consecrated by the baptism of John, so that it may be reasonably supposed that the majority were hearing for the first time of the inauguration of the kingdom of God, and even of the baptismal rite. The apostles adopted the baptismal method of their first teacher as a continuous prophecy and symbol of the cleansing of human nature, and the renewal of life effectuated by the special operation of the Spirit of God.

The entire ministry of John was denominated by Peter "John's *baptism*," and this apostle reckoned the ministry of our Lord to have begun "after the baptism which John preached." On two memorable occasions, viz., the election of a twelfth apostle, and the opening of the door of faith to the Gentiles,<sup>1</sup> John's work was prominently before him, as something closely associated in his mind with the greater mission of Him "whom God anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power." Again, when recounting<sup>2</sup> to "the apostles and brethren at Jerusalem" the memorable circumstances attending the visit to Cæsarea, Peter implied that the descent of the Spirit, the conferring of the special graces of Pentecost on the

<sup>1</sup> Acts i. 22 ; x. 37.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. xi. 15, 16.



uncircumcised Gentiles, reminded him of the word of the Lord when He said, "John indeed baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost." The water-baptism of John, with all its immediate associations, was still cited as the antithesis to the life-giving baptism with the Spirit. These two things stood in organic connection with each other both in the mind of Peter and in that of the early Church. Again, even Paul, in his elaborate speech at Antioch in Pisidia,<sup>1</sup> referred to the preparatory work of John. "John," said he, "first preached the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel;" and he added: "As John fulfilled his course" — therefore implying that this was the language of John to the last—"he cried, Whom think ye that I am? I am not HE; but behold there cometh one after me, whose shoes of His feet I am not worthy to loose." This quotation by Paul (with a peculiar use of the preposition *μετά*, only found in the Acts) gives further confirmation of the historic validity of these words so frequently attributed to the Baptist. It is the intense conviction of the prophet that he was only a transitional step in the way of the Divine manifestation, and that, great as his mission was, he knew it would be swallowed up and lost in the ministry of One mightier than himself. Jews and Gentiles alike were to be convinced of the supreme rank, the lofty claims of the Christ, by the prophetic mission and words of one whose fame had crossed the seas, and whose work and memorable testimonies were the commonplaces of Hebrew meditation in that era of startling energy and new life.

Apart, then, from any ulterior or independent pro-

<sup>1</sup> Acts xiii. 24, 25.



longation of his influence beyond the limits of the Church, John's name was a tower of strength. In this discourse, and also in another report of Paul's opinion concerning John, there is no distinct mention of John's specific testimony to Jesus as Messiah. Paul rather recites John's unqualified repudiation of the Messiahship for himself, coupled with his emphatic belief that the Messiah was standing on their threshold. "John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on him which should come after him — [that is, on (Christ) Jesus]." <sup>1</sup> Here again then, apart from certain specific hints afforded by the narrative, we find that in Ephesus the mission of John was recognized and appealed to, as one reason for believing in the Lord Jesus. Hence it appears that in Jerusalem, Cæsarea, Antioch, and Ephesus, hearers of the apostles were familiar with the career of John. These references must not be classed with other allusions to that sacred history, which was part of the canon of Scripture; but they are proof that Israel was accustomed to hearken to the voice of prophets, and to admit the supernatural authority with which they spoke. Consequently I am disposed to think that the real "influence" of which Josephus speaks, had reference to the practical consequence of John's teaching, and to the veritable, though in part unconscious, preparation he had made in the mind of Israel for the coming of the true Christ. It seems probable that many of the Lord's disciples had been profoundly affected, and guided towards Him by the religious revival effected by the

<sup>1</sup> Acts xix. 2-4. The clause, τοῦτ' ἐστὶν εἰς τὸν [χριστὸν] Ἰησοῦν, is an explanatory addition by Paul or the author of "the Acts" of the previous assertion quoted from the words of the Baptist.



ministry of John, and that the good ground, on which the seed of the kingdom produced such abundant harvest, was that which had been ploughed deep by the words of the Baptist.

There are, moreover, significant hints in the New Testament itself that John's position, notwithstanding his own sublime self-abnegation, bulked too largely to disappear with him. He merely handed on the torch of prophecy, but there were those who continued to regard him as the greatest of the sons of men; there were those who were content with what was common in the teaching of John and Jesus, disciples who had not come to any consciousness of the power and presence of the Holy Ghost, who had accepted the baptism of repentance, and had arrived at a deep belief in the necessity of righteousness, of self-government, and of ceremonial Pharisaism, or separation from the world of sin, but who entertained low views, or no views, of the person of Christ. They were zealous for the law; they did not abandon or cease to preach circumcision. They were observant of the traditions of the elders, incessant in their ablutions, fastings and prayers, and were far from admitting the claim of the Gentiles to enter on terms of equality with themselves into the kingdom of God. There was a strong party of Hebrew Christians, the phases of whose history were very varied, verging here on pure Judaism and there on mystical Gnosticism, whose writings have left their mark on Christian literature, and whose ultimate development into hostile sects, or absorption into the dominant form of Catholic Christianity, has formed no inconsiderable element in the history of the Church. Modern controversies have conferred factitious importance upon them, and it



may be safely said that the battle of the faith will be fought out when it is finally decided by competent scholarship how far the Ebionitism, of which we have abundant traces, affected the composition of the Gospels, and how far it was identical with the theology of the first and second centuries. It has been left for critics of the present generation to imagine that they can discover, within the substance of the synoptic Gospels, an old Ebionite document—a tradition which was variously modified by the Hellenistic and Pauline Christianity of the close of the first century; that they can find the anti-Judaic element strongly embodied even in the Greek Matthew; that they can discover throughout the Gospels of Mark and Luke the animus of men who wished to depreciate the twelve apostles, and expose their spiritual incapacity. The ingenuity of these speculations is only equalled by their rashness and perversity. This method of analysing an ancient document, and deciding the origin of certain portions by an imaginary standard set up in the moral consciousness, of what an unknown author could or could not have written, seems to us so hazardous, that no writing that has ever been offered to the world would come unscathed out of a similar ordeal of criticism. The method is very fascinating, but it will surely be regarded by posterity very much as the allegorizing expositions of the Alexandrines are now treated by us—as an ingenious device, but a canon of criticism absolutely untrustworthy and unscientific.

The peculiar speculation of the school of Baur, touching the method and purpose of the author of the Acts of the Apostles in the composition of that work, receives apt illustration from Baur's own treatment of



the remarkably interesting narrative <sup>1</sup> in which, for the last time in the New Testament, reference occurs to the baptism and disciples of John. Baur <sup>2</sup> sees in the conversion of Apollos and the twelve Ephesian disciples of John, in the re-baptism of the latter, and in the descent upon them of the Spirit, a mere device of the narrator, in an apologetic and conciliatory strain, to show that Paul's apostolate was distinguished, as Peter's had been, by the bestowal of the Spirit of God on a *new group* of recipients. He supposes that since Peter had been thus distinguished at Pentecost, in Samaria, and Cæsarea, in administering this gift to Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles, so for Paul a new class, neither Jews nor Gentiles, had to be invented, that he might have the honour of conferring a similar grace upon *them*, and that the author of "the Acts" hit upon the plausible expedient of dignifying Paul's ministry by assigning to him the baptism of John's disciples. If this had been the intention of the writer, it is very remarkable that he did not represent Apollos himself as one of the fruits of Paul's ministry, and that he did not thus provide for his hero something like an effective counterpoise to the splendid story of Cornelius. Unfortunately for the hypothesis, Aquila and Priscilla were the instruments of the conversion and spiritual endowments of Apollos; and notwithstanding the tempting association of his name with the baptism of John, no re-baptism, and no miraculous speaking with tongues, is referred to in his case. The

<sup>1</sup> Acts xviii. 24-xix. 7.

<sup>2</sup> See *Paul: his Life and Works, his Epistles and Teachings; a Contribution to a Critical History of Primitive Christianity*. By Dr. F. C. Baur. Issued and edited by E. Zeller: translated from German. Williams and Norgate, vol. i. pp. 191-197.



narrative is puzzling to those who are unwilling to admit the facts to which it obviously bears witness. The facts, however, are of considerable interest. The narrative distinctly reveals the diffusion in different directions of believers said to be the disciples of John, who had a very imperfect conception of Christ and of His kingdom. They had shared the religious revival effected by John's ministry. They were even regarded by the Christians of Ephesus as in some sense disciples (*μαθηταί*). Paul addressed them as "believers" (*πιστεύσαντες*)<sup>1</sup> In the case of Apollos,<sup>2</sup> who had come from Alexandria, and is expressly described as a Jew, born in Alexandria, we are further told that he was a learned or eloquent man (*λόγιος*); that he was mighty in the Scriptures and fervent in spirit, able to expound and apply the Old Testament; that he was instructed, moreover, in "the way of the Lord;"<sup>3</sup> and that he even spoke and taught (*ἀκριβῶς*) accurately the things concerning Jesus, knowing only the baptism of John. Baur sees so much difficulty in this statement, that even on his own hypothesis he is anxious to expunge this clause,

<sup>1</sup> The Rev. Dr. A. Mahan, in his interesting and devout work on *The Baptism of the Holy Ghost*, lays great emphasis on this word, which he uniformly translates "*since ye believed.*" On the supposed priority of the faith of these disciples to their reception of the Holy Spirit, an argument is built up to the effect that faith in Christ to salvation always precedes the gift of the Holy Spirit in the order of Divine operations, and that St. Paul was referring to this order in the form of the sentence. A frequent use of the aorist infinitive and aorist participle to denote a time simultaneous with that of the principal verb, ought to have prevented such a theological use of this passage. "When ye believed" would be a more adequate translation. The faith, moreover, is shown by the context to have been most imperfect and inadequate. Alford, Gloag, Meyer, *in loc.*, and Winer, *Gram. of N. T. Gr.* p. 430. Cf. Acts i. 24; Rom. iv. 30; Eph. iv. 8; Col. ii. 13; 1 Tim. i. 3, &c.

<sup>2</sup> Or Apollonius, as *Codex Bezae* reads; or Apelles, according to N.

<sup>3</sup> A phrase used in relation to the ministry of the Baptist (Mark i. 3; Matt. iii. 3).



as eminently unhistorical, and a contradiction in terms. But what was it that Aquila and Priscilla explained to him "more accurately"? Surely the truth of which he had been left in ignorance—the scriptural and other evidence that was available to prove the full Messiahship of Jesus. It is conceivable, without recourse to the rough and desperate remedy of Baur, that the burden of John's teaching about the Lord had been enough for Apollos. Jesus was the Messianic Man. The kingdom of God was one of righteousness and purity and holy judgment. A baptism with the Holy Spirit, which he did not appreciate or know to have been realized, was as yet a splendid dream. The mystery of the Cross and the Resurrection, and the wondrous illumination of Pentecost, had not been made known to Apollos. He was ignorant of the nature of the kingdom as it was proclaimed by Paul. He occupied a position not unlike that of one Ebionite section of the Church. With strong Hebrew leanings, with great natural powers, he was still waiting for "the consolation of Israel." The light cast upon his mind was gladly accepted, and he became the messenger and representative of the Ephesian Christians to the Church in Corinth. He was of immense service to the Corinthians "who had believed through grace."<sup>1</sup> He "watered"<sup>2</sup> the seed which Paul had planted. He aided them in resisting the attacks which the Jewish Christians and which orthodox Jews levelled at the doctrine of the Cross; and he did this with so much effect, that a section of the Corinthian Church made his name the badge of a partisanship, which it is obvious, from Paul's noble language about

<sup>1</sup> Acts xviii. 27.<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 6.



him, was distressing and contrary to his best feelings.<sup>1</sup> In several allusions made by Paul to this distinguished man, it is evident that there was not the slightest breach in their friendship, or in their religious sympathy. Apollos appears to have been with Paul when he wrote the First Epistle to the Corinthians.<sup>2</sup> Possibly he contrasts his own harsher style of speech with the polished rhetoric of his friend, the one having been trained in the Jewish schools of Tarsus and Jerusalem, the other amid the more Hellenized influences of the philosophy and manners of Alexandria.<sup>3</sup> Several biblical critics of eminence, following a suggestion of Luther,<sup>4</sup> have rendered plausible the supposition that Apollos was at least the author of the diction of the Epistle to the Hebrews.<sup>5</sup> This supposition throws scarcely any light upon the previous relations of Apollos with the disciples of John, unless we have a quiet hint in this direction in the importance there laid on "the doctrine of baptisms."<sup>6</sup> It is extremely probable that some intimate relations subsisted between Apollos and these twelve disciples. It is not unlikely that Apollos had baptized these disciples "unto repentance," knowing baptism only as the commission of John; and, moreover, that he had taken this step quite recently—that is, long after the foundation of the Church, and without understanding the higher authority and grander significance of the Christian rite. However that may be, it is obvious from the narrative that these men were *not* baptized by *John himself*. When Paul asked them, "Unto what, then, were ye bap-

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. i. 12.<sup>2</sup> Ibid. iii. 4, 6, 22; iv. 6; xvi. 12. Cf. Titus iii. 13.<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 4; 2 Cor. xi. 5.<sup>4</sup> *Commentary on Genesis*, xlviii. 20.<sup>5</sup> De Wette partially adopts the hypothesis. Lünemann, Bleek, Tholuck, Reuss, Lütterbeck, and Alford.<sup>6</sup> Heb. vi. 3.



tized?" their answer was,—not that they had been among John's disciples from the first, or that they had been baptized by him ; but—"Unto John's baptism." The significance and purport of their being baptized was the "baptism of John," a synonym for the doctrine and commission and ideal of life set forth by John. The inquiry, "Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed (πιστεύσαντες)?" implies that some influences had been brought to bear upon their understanding allied to that which brought men into the Church. But the wonderful effects produced on the intelligence of first converts—expository of far deeper, more comprehensive, and blessed changes effected in their hidden life—was an experience to which, as yet, they had been strangers. The baptism which they had received was accompanied by no such startling manifestation. They did not so much as know that the Holy Ghost promised by John had ever been imparted. If this was their state of mind, their case reveals an almost unread page of the earliest Church history. It seems to me more reasonable to unroll that page than to invent motives for the composition of an utterly unhistorical narrative of events which never happened. Either from the teaching of Apollos, or of some other disciple as much impressed as he undoubtedly was with the spiritual revival effected by John, they had acquired a very loose and imperfect conception of the indispensable importance of the greater name and mightier work of Jesus. To multitudes of Jews He may have been little more than a *nominis umbra*. Though some very enthusiastic men counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of that name, perhaps nearly all that others



had learned in their ascetic, therapeutic isolation, may have been, that Christians constituted "a sect everywhere spoken against." John was their hero, their second Adam, their king of men, and his memory was the principal link of connection amongst them. They were not indisposed for further light. They accepted the assurance of Paul that John's ministry was transitional and introductory to the kingdom of Christ, and they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. Paul laid his hands on them, and the Holy Ghost came on them, and they spake with tongues, and prophesied. The same result may have followed similar contact with many another group of the followers of John who were thus absorbed into the Christian Church.

There were as we know many allied forms of Judaic Christianity which fell far short of the standard of Paul, or even of Peter. Some endeavoured to retain much if not all that was distinctive of Judaism, and yet to take advantage of the kingdom of Christ. They were ready to accept the gospel, but at the same time to "preach circumcision;" they were willing to believe in Jesus, and also to believe in the privilege of their race and the sanctity of their temple. There were many who undoubtedly did not go beyond the Essenic position, and while they took spiritual views of the old law and its more burdensome ritual, never dreamed of breaking loose from Judaism. Their "faith" fell short of any deep conviction of the true nature and real work of Christ, and they did not know whether there had been any manifestation of, or baptism with, the Holy Ghost. To what extent they made common cause with the disciples of John cannot be historically shown, but



some suggestive hints are found in the *Clementine Homilies*, which throw a passing gleam of light on the ideas entertained with reference to John the Baptist at the end of the second century. Thus "there was one John, a Hemero-baptist (one who baptizes every day), who was also, according to the method of combination, the forerunner of our Lord Jesus; and as the Lord had twelve apostles, bearing the number of the months of the sun, so also he (John) had thirty chief men, fulfilling the monthly reckoning of the moon, in which number was a certain woman called Helena, so that not even this might be without a dispensational significance. . . . But of these thirty, the first and most esteemed by John was Simon."<sup>1</sup> The following chapter relates in detail how one Dositheus obtained by stratagem the supreme position, as John's successor after his death, but was compelled to yield to the greater might and magical force of Simon, and how Simon, at the head of the twenty-nine disciples, received the homage due to their chief.

This singular assertion finds its parallel and some exposition in the first book of the *Clementine Recognitions*,<sup>2</sup> where Peter is represented as describing the Jewish sects which had sprung up ever "since the days of the Baptist." We find in this address some remarkable historical blunders, such as the origination of the sect of the Sadducees at the time of John; but the assertion is made, that the Samaritans were hindered by the wickedness of Dositheus from believing that Jesus was Christ. Scribes and Pharisees, we are told, "being baptized by John, and holding the word of truth received from the tradition of Moses, have hid it from the hearing

<sup>1</sup> *Hom.* ii. c. 23. 24. *A.-N. L.* vol. xvii. p. 42.

<sup>2</sup> *Recog.* lib. i. cc. 54-60. *A.-N. L.* vol. iii. pp. 178-182.



of the people. Yea, some even of the disciples of John, *who seemed to be great ones*, have separated themselves from the people, and proclaimed their own master as the Christ." In chapter lx. one of the disciples of John is said to have asserted that "John was the Christ, and not Jesus, inasmuch as Jesus Himself declared that John was greater than all men and all prophets." The arguments by which this heresy was confuted are then given. These passages may at least be taken to show that in the middle or end of the second century, disciples of John were existing who urged his claims as Messiah, who separated themselves from the Christian Church, and from that which this Ebionitic writer conceived to be orthodox doctrine touching the rank and glory of the Christ. They point also to Dositheus and Simon as embodying this opinion. Throughout the pseudo-Clementine literature Simon is the heresiarch, the antagonist of Peter and the enemy of all righteousness; and to represent him as the leader of the thirty chief disciples of John, was to pronounce a very severe condemnation upon *them*. A certain element of passion is betrayed in the statement which suggests that the disciples of John were showing themselves antagonistic to the Christian community, as judged from the standpoint of the Clementines.

The early Christian writers are silent on the subject of this community, and treat the function and work of John in a manner that is in harmony with the biblical narrative. Thus Justin Martyr<sup>1</sup> discusses at length the prophecies concerning John, and he identifies him with the forerunner of Isaiah's prophecy and the Elijah of Malachi, basing his judgment entirely on words of our

<sup>1</sup> *Dial. c. Tryph.* chaps. xlix.-li.



Lord. Hippolytus<sup>1</sup> recognizes the simple biblical ideas concerning the forerunner of Christ, though he holds out a further hope of the coming of Elijah before the final advent of the Lord ; and in his description of the baptism of our Lord he adopts the view of the thoroughly subordinate transitional character of John's mission, and the transcendent excellence of the Lord. Origen<sup>2</sup> quotes Josephus as an historical vindication of the functions and character of John, without furnishing any additional trait of reverence or controversial conception of his character.

Tertullian<sup>3</sup> declares "that all John's doings were laid as groundwork for Christ until when 'He had increased,'—just as the same John used to foreannounce 'that it was needful that He should increase and himself decrease,'—the whole work of the forerunner passed over together with his spirit itself unto the Lord." He adds that John's form of prayer was not extant, and proceeds to comment on the Lord's prayer. As we have previously seen, Tertullian stood almost alone in a conviction that the Spirit of God was withdrawn from John as a prophetic gift when he closed his public ministry, and that he occupied a thoroughly transitional position between the Old Testament and the New. There are no hints that we can discover in Tertullian of the community still adhering to the name and glorying in the baptism of John. The later fathers of the Church use language about John closely resembling that of the earliest writers. He is the forerunner, the preacher of repentance, the great agent by whom the Messiah was baptized, the ascetic, the martyr, the saint, the

<sup>1</sup> *Treatise on Christ and Antichrist*, 44-46; *Works of Hipp. A.-N. L.* vol. ii. pp. 25-27.

<sup>2</sup> *C. Celsus*, chap. xlvii.

<sup>3</sup> *Treatise on Prayer. A.-N. L.* vol. i. p. 179.



pattern monk, if not the model man. The following passages may be sufficient to establish the theological position in which he was held during the fourth century. Chrysostom in many discourses is eloquent in his praise of the penitence, abstinence, and sanctity enjoined by the Baptist, as well as in indignation over his cruel martyrdom. In the discourse<sup>1</sup> on "the forerunner," John's proclamation is made the basis of a rhetorical appeal for penitence. His "camel's hair," "leathern girdle," and "loins" are alike spiritualized, and his baptism of Jesus is thus explained: "Jesus said, Suffer it to be so now; thou must be the witness of the voice now issued concerning me. It is fitting that I should teach how a man must be born of water and of the Spirit, or he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. It is necessary that I should first act and then teach, lest the Jews should take exception and say, He teacheth others, let him teach himself. I must open the womb of water and the spirit, and thus be the firstborn among many brethren." So also in the discourse<sup>2</sup> on "the Holy Theophany and St. John the forerunner," he exhibits the warmest enthusiasm about this great hero, and enlarges on the astounding effect produced on the mind of John by the appearance of our Lord among the candidates for his baptism. "Dost *thou* bend thy head to me, who hast bended the heavens that thou mightest come down to earth, whose head is God Himself, the head that cherubim adore? . . . . Why shouldst thou submit to the baptism of repentance, thou who hast pity on the repenting?" and in glowing rhetoric he accumulates every element of the incon-

<sup>1</sup> εἰς τὸν πρόδρομον. Chrys. *Opera*, Ed. Fronto Parisiis, 1536. Tom. vi. pp. 311, ff.

<sup>2</sup> L. c. pp. 363-368.



gruous and perplexing in the demand, to which Christ replies: "I admire thy modesty, but require thine obedience in this matter. Thou hast been made the patron of my kingdom, thou oughtest to be the minister of my dispensation. I have come to thee, that all men may come to me." There is also a sermon by Chrysostom on "the dancing of Herodias and beheading of John,"<sup>1</sup> charged with high enthusiasm for the martyr. "When the sword smote his sacred neck, the wild beasts of the desert trembled, the dragons and young lions shook with fear, the wild bees hushed their toil: the head of the Baptist, from the charger of the executioner, shouted to the king, 'It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife.'"

The reference to this subject in the Apocryphal Gospels sheds no historical light upon the prolongation of John's influence. But the "Gospel of Nicodemus" contains a picturesque description of the appearance of the Baptist in Hades, whither he went before the King of Glory, to prepare His way, even as he had done on earth. Adam and all the patriarchs accept with lowly reverence the claims of the prophet who baptized the Christ, who had discerned "the Lamb of the Lord, the Son of God." With slight varieties, the same scene is repeated in both the Greek and Latin forms of the second part of the Gospel, entitled "the Descent of Christ into Hell."<sup>2</sup> There is strong indication given of the intimate acquaintance of the writer with the synoptic and Johannine Gospels, and there are hints of the reverence felt within the heart of Christendom for the great forerunner. There is no suspicion here of any rivalry

<sup>1</sup> L. c. p. 379, ff.

<sup>2</sup> See *Ante-Nic. Lib.* "Apocryphal Gospels," pp. 170-200, 217, 218.



between the Christ and John. The most striking form of the imaginative representation is as follows. After the prophet Hesaias had explained the meaning of a great light shining over the abysses of Hades, "there came into the midst another, an ascetic from the desert, and the patriarchs said to him, Who art thou? And he said, I am John, the last of the prophets, who made the paths of the Son of God straight, and proclaimed to the people repentance for the remission of sins. And the Son of God came to me, and I, seeing Him a long way off, said to the people, Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world. And with my hand I baptized him, and I saw the Holy Spirit like a dove coming upon Him, and I heard a voice of God, even of the Father, saying, 'This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.' And on this account He sent me also to you to proclaim how the only begotten Son of God is coming here, that whosoever shall believe on Him shall be saved, and whosoever shall not believe on Him shall be condemned. On this account I say unto you all, in order that when you see Him you may adore Him, that now only is for you the time of repentance for having adored idols in the vain upper world, and for the sins you have committed, and that this is impossible at any other time." It should be added that some of the Greek Fathers condemned this conceit. Gregory of Nazianzus and Hippolytus accepted it, but Chrysostom rejected it.<sup>1</sup>

This document, whatever inferences may be drawn from it as to the state of departed souls, and the power of prayer, prophecy, special revelation, personal re-

<sup>1</sup> Tillemont, *Mémoires*, i. 518.



pentance, and faith in the unseen world, does not add anything to our knowledge of the influence which John exercised over the less instructed portions of the Christian Church.

The Donatists and Novatians had justified their repetition of baptism on the ground of the rebaptism of the Ephesian disciples. Augustine vehemently contended against the inference drawn by them, that Christian baptism could be invalidated by the unworthiness of the hands that administered it. He did so by drawing what he conceived to be an important distinction between John's baptism and Christian baptism. "The baptism of Judas would have been valid;" "the sacrament of Christ is so sacred, that even the ministration of a murderer would not pollute it." But "the baptism of John is of an essentially different nature." This opinion was, as we have seen, subsequently formulated by the Tridentine divines into an article of creed. In later times it has been maintained by different theological schools, with different objects in view. The interesting controversy between Kinghorn and Robert Hall on the "terms of Christian communion" led the latter to delineate the essential distinction between the baptism of John and Christian baptism. The points on which he insisted were, (1) that John's baptism was not a Christian ordinance; (2) that it did not demand faith in the historic Christ, nor was it administered in the name of Jesus; (3) that it was not followed by the baptism with the Holy Ghost; and (4) that John's disciples were rebaptized by Paul. The conclusion is that Christian baptism had no existence before the day of Pentecost; and, therefore, that the plea of those who would make the supposed priority of that ordi-



nance to the Lord's Supper a ground for insisting on baptism as a term of communion, falls to the ground.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Hall wrote also an extended treatise on the same subject in criticism of Mr. Kinghorn's "Plea for Primitive Communion," in which he reviews his own position and those of his opponent with that consummate skill, candour, and mastery of English, for which he is so justly remarkable.<sup>2</sup> In this treatise a fresh point made by Mr. Hall is that Christian baptism is one *into the death* of Christ, a prime peculiarity which could not be attributed to John's baptism. There is much in Hall's eloquent argument which illustrates the position I have ventured to maintain in this volume as to the inchoate, imperfect, and transitional work of John, and therefore the symbolic, prophetic, anticipatory quality of his baptism with water. But the identity of the physical act in both instances, and the reiterated distinction drawn by John, by Christ, and by the apostles, between the baptism with water and the baptism with the Holy Ghost, show that water-baptism under the Christian dispensation is as symbolic and anticipatory as it was in the hands of John. Mr. Hall is abundantly justified in disputing "the plea for primitive communion" based on the supposed identity of the baptism of John with that of Christian baptism; but it seems to me that he does not see that the identity of the rite in both cases leads to still broader conclusions as to the real place of the rite in the dispensation of the Spirit.

<sup>1</sup> Robert Hall, *Works*, vol. ii. 1-43.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 180-232.



§ 1. *In the existence of obscure Johannine Sects.*

A sect of Jewish origin, calling themselves HEMERO-BAPTISTS, claimed a John as their founder, whether or not he can be identified with John the Baptist.<sup>1</sup> Eusebius informs us that Hegesippus enumerates these Hemero-Baptists among the Jewish sects.<sup>2</sup> Epiphanius<sup>3</sup> describes their opinions as resembling those of the Pharisees and Sadducees, and as differing only in the folly of supposing that daily baptism would wash away all sin. The Clementine Homilies<sup>4</sup> speak of John as their founder, though in such a loose manner that no dependence can be placed upon it, as historic evidence of fact. Their daily religious ablution indicates, however, some correspondence with a similar custom among the Essenes.

Under various names, certain sectaries of dubiously Jewish, Gnostic, Mohammedan, and Christian origin, have, down to the present day, inhabited certain districts of Persia. They have called themselves *Mendai-Ijahi*, and are termed by others *Sabeans*. European travellers have denominated them "*Christians of St. John*." The Arabs call them *El-Mogtasila*, "the Baptists," and M. Renan assures us that the Aramaic word *Seba* is synonymous with baptize.<sup>5</sup> Very different ex-

<sup>1</sup> Mosheim, *De Rebus Christianorum ante Constantinum Magnum*, p. 44 ; also *Ecclesiastical History*, translated by A. Maclaine, 1811. vol. iv. p. 251.

<sup>2</sup> *Hist. Ecc.* lib. iv. 22.

<sup>3</sup> *Adv. Hæreses*, lib. i. ; *Hær.* xvii. Ed. cit. vol. i. p. 37.

<sup>4</sup> *Hom.* ii. 23.

<sup>5</sup> *Vie de Jesus*, c. vi. ; *Histoire des Langues Sémitiques*, iii. 4. 1. M. Norberg also thinks that Tsaba is equivalent to *intinxit* or *immersit*, and may account for their name. Sale, in *Preface to Translation of Koran*, p. 15. thinks that *Seba* refers to the "host of heaven" worshipped by them. He adds : "They use 'a kind of baptism,' which is the greatest mark of their resemblance to Christians." "Travellers," says he, "commonly call them Christians of St. John."



planations have been given of their opinions.<sup>1</sup> The only source of information to which it is safe to appeal is found in the books which they attribute to ADAM and JOHN THE BAPTIST, a prophet whom they hold in high esteem. The latter book contains an "office for baptism," and a dialogue between John and Christ. Christ asks John to baptize Him, but John brings a number of charges against Jesus—such as His accusing Moses of falsehood, and forbidding marriage. Both these charges are denied. Meanwhile, as John hesitates, a message comes from "the house of Abatur," permitting it; but "the blue waters of the Jordan become dark, and a cross appears." The book also contains "the precepts of John," which consist of short moral maxims.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> They have been referred to by Thevenot, *Voyages*, tom. iv. 584; Assemanus, *Biblioth. Orient.* Stäudlin criticised various *Sidras* or fragments of their sacred books, which had found their way into European libraries. Bayer and La Croze advocated their Manichæan origin. Mosheim appeals rightly to their sacred books. Gibbon, *Decl. and Fall.* Smith's Ed. vi. 214, says: "It is a slippery task to ascertain the creed of an ignorant people, afraid and ashamed to disclose their secret traditions." See Calmet, *Dictionary and Fragments*.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew Norberg, 1815, a Swede, edited and translated into Latin, in two volumes quarto, the *Codex Nasoræus, Liber Adami Appellatus*, with notes and a Syriac glossary. He discusses their feeble claim to be regarded as Christians, notwithstanding their preservation of a species of baptism and holy communion. The publication of Norberg led Tychsen to dispute the antiquity of the document, and a warm discussion between De Sacy, Tychsen, and Norberg ensued, in which Norberg proved that though there might be modern admixtures, the *Codex* does represent a product of older faiths. Norberg introduced a curious sketch written in Galilean Syriac by Germanus Conti, about 1650, descriptive of a sect of Johannites, the substance of which is as follows: "That these people formerly dwelt in Galilee of Palestine, and thence migrated to *Mercab*, in the Lebanon; \* that John the Baptist was their founder, and that their community represents the closing phases of Judaism. Their priest is robed in tiara and garments of camel's hair, and administers a sacrament of *locusts and wild honey*. These elements being consecrated, are distributed to those who are present, and taken to the homes of the absentees. On no occasion is either element partaken of without the deepest reverence. The day on

\* Peterman, in Herzog, *Ency.* art. "Mendäer," thinks this improbable.



The *Liber Adami* is a portion of a much larger book, *Sidra Rabba*, which contains the workmanship of many successive generations ; and the religious system it contains is an amalgam of different religions of antiquity. It is unnecessary to recite here the principal features of these Gnostic speculations. The people who reverence the book do undoubtedly exist at the present day. They practise baptism, and celebrate the Holy Supper with the elements of bread and water. Among their various annual festivals, there is one which lasts fifteen days, called the *Paatscha*, when every Mendæan is bound to be baptized, though the most ceremonious among them celebrate the rite every Sunday.

Their numbers are gradually diminishing. Towards the middle of the seventeenth century they exceeded twenty thousand families. They are now reduced to

which this is sacramentally taken is a festival on which they abstain from all other business or pleasure, and as much as possible from speech. Once a month a solemn convocation is held in the temples. The commencement of their service is a repetition of John i. 1, but they do not admit Christ to be the Son of God, but His prophet. There is no ornament in their temples, but there is a font for baptism, and a table for the honey and locusts. They offer this prayer : ' John, whom we revere in place of our Father, we pray thee be gracious to us, free us from all hostile power, and make the light of true religion illumine our mind.' Then follows sacrament and teaching, recitation from the sacred book, with closed and guarded doors. The festival of John's birth is kept, then that of the day on which he originated baptism, when all the community approach the water, enter it, drink it, and are sprinkled with it, the chief priest exclaiming, ' I renew your baptism in the name of the Father and of our saviour ( John). May he who baptized the Jews in the Jordan, and preserved them in like manner, preserve you.' On the day of John's decapitation there is solemn deprecation of the act ; and finally, on the day on which John killed a dragon in Lake Tiberias, it is the custom to lead cattle and flocks around the temple with great rejoicing." The whole of the statement is open to grave scepticism, as it stands alone, and is unconfirmed by other testimony. The language of the *Codex* has features which the Jews say were characteristic of the Galilean dialect, and thus indicate its source, but there are undoubted references to Mohammed, and sundry very curious Gnostic speculations. Art. " Mendæer," Herzog's *Ency.*, refers to L. E. Burckhardt, *Les Nasoréens ou Mandai-Jahia appelés ordinairement Zabians et Chrétiens de St. Jean Baptiste*, 1840. I have not been able to obtain this treatise.



about fifteen hundred individuals, inhabiting a region south of Bagdad, between the two rivers, and in certain portions of Chusistan. Mosheim particularly signalized Bosra (Bassorah), nearer the Persian Gulf, as their special habitat. I have given in the note the curious recital of Germanus Conti, who found persons entertaining somewhat similar opinions in the Lebanon. They do not distinguish themselves externally from the Mohammedans amongst whom they live.

The examination we have given to the matter brings us to the conclusion that the connection of this sect with John the Baptist, or his earliest followers, is of the feeblest kind. Still, they treat his name with peculiar reverence, and give him a rank in the universe and in the history of Divine revelation higher than that assigned to any other mortal.

§ 2. *In the Honour done to the Name of John in the Roman Church.*

The honour that has been done to the Baptist's name in the Roman Catholic Church is remarkable. Though the fundamental distinction between his baptism and that of Christ has been asserted on the highest authority, he has been canonized as a saint of the Roman Church, and two festivals are celebrated in his honour in the Roman calendar. A grand exception is made in his favour, that whereas for the most part the death of the saints of God is the event especially commemorated by the Church, the birth of John was so remarkable, that it is deemed worthy of special distinction. Indeed, St. Bernard<sup>1</sup> tells us "that the Church which

<sup>1</sup> S. Bernardi *Opera*. Ed. Mabillon. Paris, 1839. vol. i. 390, ep. 174.



judges and pronounces precious the death of other saints, in this case has made singular exception, and commemorates the nativity of him concerning whom the herald-angel strangely said, 'Multi in nativitate ejus gaudebunt:' 'many shall rejoice at his birth.' Why should not he who leaped in the womb for joy have holy, festive, joyful issue thence?" The 24th of June is celebrated with special honours in devout remembrance of the "birth" of St. John. But it has not been enough to celebrate his birth; the Church has also set apart another day, August 29th, to commemorate his "decollation."

Ecclesiastical tradition has adorned with a variety of curious details the historical statement that his disciples buried his corpse. Ruffinus and Theodoret inform us that this tomb was at Sebaste, in Samaria,<sup>1</sup> and around it Jerome saw the same wild orgies celebrated as those which still disgrace the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem. Mohammedans call it the tomb of the "Prophet John, the son of Zacharias." The tomb, we are told, was rifled by the pagans in the days of Julian. Portions of the relics were burned, and the remainder, preserved by the Christians, were sent to Athanasius, at Alexandria. In the year A.D. 396 Theodosius built a church in Alexandria, over the relics. Portions of these sacred ashes were sent to other churches. Thus Theodoret claims to have received some for his church at Cyrus. The head of John was said to have been found in Jerusalem, and transported to Emessa, in Syria, in A.D. 453, and a church was built over it. In A.D. 800 the precious treasure was conveyed to Constantinople. When that city was

<sup>1</sup> See Stanley's *Sinai and Palestine*, p. 242.



taken by the French, A.D. 1204, the face was brought to Amiens, and around its shrine, in the cathedral church, may still be seen the splendid group of *alto-relievos* which portray different scenes in the life of the prophet. Part of the skull is said to be preserved in St. Sylvester's Church in Rome, and Cardinal Wiseman has argued at great length,<sup>1</sup> that because these scattered portions, if brought together, would fit into one another, they may together constitute the head of John the Baptist! It is consistent that the supposed remains of the prophet should be honoured by the Church which has accepted as essential to Christianity so large a portion of the Johannine position and teaching; nevertheless, he who cried, "Now is the axe laid at the root of the trees: whosoever bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire"—would have laughed to scorn this scrambling for his skull.<sup>2</sup>

§ 3. *In the Position assigned to John the Baptist in Christian Art.*

The task of representing the echoes of the ministry of John would not be complete without a brief reference to the influence which the memory of this great saint has exerted on Christian art. Standing between the Old Covenant and the New, and indissolubly connected with the whole cycle of events by which the kingdom of God has been established and revealed to men, he has become dear to the heart of the Christian Church; and the affection felt towards him, and the awe and reverence inspired by his name, have found expression in the habit of dedicating churches and

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix D.

<sup>2</sup> The details are given in great length in *Acta Sanctorum*, and in Tillemont, *Mémoires*, vol. i. pp. 106-113, 520-533.



baptisteries to his memory, both in the East and the West. Not only in Sebaste, where it was reported that his martyred remains were first buried, but in Alexandria and Rome—to both of which it was believed that in subsequent days fragments of these sacred relics were conveyed—churches arose in his honour. Moreover, wherever in early and mediæval times a building was erected for baptismal purposes, it was associated with his name, and decorated with the sculpture or painting of some of those events in John's career which so readily lend themselves to artistic representation. "In all the Christian edifices, even in the catacombs, there was set apart a baptistery, with a font for the baptizing of children and converts, always dedicated to St. John."<sup>1</sup> Thus the Basilica of St. John Lateran, in Rome, which is called *omnium urbis et orbis ecclesiarum mater et caput*, though first devoted to Christian uses in the reign of Constantine, was finally dedicated to St. John the Baptist in the pontificate of Lucius II. When, in A.D. 1644, the ancient building was restored by Urban VIII., the work of decorating the font was entrusted to Andrea Sacchi. Little can be said in praise of his work. The Princess Theodolinda reared in FLORENCE, in the year A.D. 589, a baptistery on the site of a heathen temple, and in later years, Giotto, Ghiberti, and Andrea Pisano lavished upon the gorgeous structure the wealth of their genius. It is, together with other adornment, a dream in stone and precious bronzes of all the heroism and the mystery of the life and life-work of

<sup>1</sup> *The History of our Lord, as Exemplified in Works of Art, with that of His Type, St. John the Baptist, &c.*, commenced by the late Mrs. Jameson, continued and completed by Lady Eastlake. Vol. i. p. 282.



John. Florence itself is especially placed under his patronage.

“In that city I dwelt,  
Who for the Baptist her first patron changed,”

says a Florentine in Dante's *Divina Commedia*.<sup>1</sup> “Tell me,” says another—

“Tell me of the fold  
That hath Saint John for guardian !”<sup>2</sup>

The church of *Santa Maria Novella* is decorated with a series of pictures by Ghirlandajo, illustrating the history of the Baptist. The superb cathedral of AMIENS is not only dedicated to John, but its choir is surrounded by a series of crowded sculptures, in *alto-relievo*, representing successive events in his wonderful career. The famous font of bronze gilt in the baptistery of SIENA was adorned by the greatest artists of the time with six historical scenes, in *basso-relievo*, taken from events in the life of John. A similar group is found, in fresco, on the walls of *Lo Scalzo* at Florence, the work of Andrea del Sarto; and another in the cathedral of PRATO, dedicated to St. John the Baptist and St. Stephen, by the hands of Fra Filippo Lippi.

The scene and circumstances of John's nativity, and the sanctity thus conferred upon Elizabeth, are among the commonplaces of Christian art; and every representation of the “salutation” of Mary by the mother of the Baptist is charged with the idea on which the Roman Catholic divines, by a strained exegesis, lay so much emphasis, viz., the prophecy of the unborn babe. Through many of them there seem to vibrate the accents of the hymn of Pistor:—

<sup>1</sup> *Inferno*, xiii. 145. Carey's Trans.

<sup>2</sup> *Paradiso*, xvi. 23.



“Præcursore nondum nato,  
Nondum partu reserato,  
Reserantur mystica,  
Nostro sole tunc exclusus,  
Verioris est perfusus,  
Solis luce typicâ.”

The “Holy Family” is seldom complete without the introduction of the infant John, as conscious in child-like innocence of the glory of his youthful companion, and as prematurely alive to the meaning of the Cross and the symbolism of the Lamb. Leonardo, Raphael, Rubens, Vandyck, and Murillo put forth their varied powers to represent the holy childhood of the herald of Christ, and the lovely blending of his earliest thoughts and cares with those of Jesus; while there are not a few representations of the youth of John in the desert, already bearing the reed cross, and the scroll, ECCE AGNUS DEI. Not unfrequently he is represented as an adoring worshipper of the Lord, sometimes as seated, sometimes kneeling before the enthroned and glorified Saviour. In the celebrated *Madonna di Foligno* of Raphael, “he stands as patron and witness, pointing up to the Saviour with a sort of wild, haggard, yet inspired look.”<sup>1</sup> In this, as in many representations of the canonized saints of the Church, John takes his place in defiance of all chronology. Thus the ascetic prophet not only appears in maturity during the childhood of Jesus, but is often grouped in company with saints of after ages — as with St. Antony, St. Nicholas, and St. Catherine, St. Lawrence, St. Francis, and St. Bernard. In most of these groups we see conspicuously taught the dignity of John’s self-abnegation, the grandeur of his martyr-

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Jameson, l. c. p. 289.



dom, the glory of his ascetic conquest of self. He is the pattern eremite of Oriental and Latin Christianity, of Greek and Italian art.

In the historical pictures in which John is introduced, and which are often grouped in a series, Christian painters have seldom wandered beyond the ample scope provided for them in the narratives of Scripture. In two or three representations of his birth, however, the Virgin Mary is seen to be a spectator and participant in the joy of Elizabeth.<sup>1</sup> Artistic feeling has sometimes transformed the young eremite into a youthful Apollo; and one remarkable picture in the Academy at Siena represents the descent of John into Hades, as indicated in the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus.<sup>2</sup> But the more common themes are his ministry in the wilderness, the baptism of Jesus, the reproof of Herod, the banquet at Machærus, the decollation, and the burial.

Mr. Ruskin,<sup>3</sup> speaking of the baptism of Christ as a subject for art, says: "However important, and however deep in its meaning, it supplies not to the ordinary painter material enough ever to form a picture of high interest. From the purity of Giotto to the intolerable, inconceivable brutality of Salvator, every order of feeling has been displayed in its treatment; but I am aware of no single case, except this of which I am about to speak, in which it has formed an impressive picture." He refers to Verrocchio, Giotto, Angelico, with moderated approval, and the one exception of which he speaks in eloquent words is that of Tintoret.<sup>4</sup>

Mrs. Jameson is far less sweeping in her condemna-

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Jameson, l. c. p. 291, 303.

<sup>3</sup> *Modern Painters*, vol. ii. p. 170.

<sup>2</sup> See *ante*, p. 470.

<sup>4</sup> See Appendix E.



tion, but she says truly: "For a subject of such deep religious import, it has often been treated as a group accessory in a fine landscape." Even Milton's mighty lines scarce reveal the hand which drew the glories of Paradise and the crown of hell.<sup>1</sup> The innumerable efforts made to portray the sufferings and the martyrdom of John show the powerful hold which the mission of the Baptist, and its tragic close, took upon the sympathies of the Christian Church. A heroism more sublime, a character more lofty in its aims, a self-sacrifice more complete, humility more nobly blended with majestic energy, personal devotion and purity crowned with a more impressive martyrdom, have not illumined the annals of mankind. "Among them that are born of women, there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist."

Art, which is ever searching for ideal manhood, and crowning its own conceptions with aureoles of reverence and love, never found, save in Incarnate God, a nobler theme than the childhood and the manhood, the life-work and the death-agony of the Baptist. In Christian art the "Voice" still echoes through the corridors of time, the "burning and shining torch" has gleamed

<sup>1</sup> "Now had the great proclaimer, with a voice  
More awful than the sound of trumpet, cried,  
Repentance, and heaven's kingdom nigh at hand  
To all baptized. To his great baptism flocked  
With awe the regions round, and with them came,  
From Nazareth, the Son of Joseph deem'd,  
To the flood Jordan; came as then obscure,  
Unmark'd, unknown; but Him the Baptist soon  
Descried, divinely warn'd, and witness bore  
As to his worthier, and would have resigned  
To Him his heavenly office, nor was long  
His witness unconfirmed. On Him baptized  
Heaven open'd, and in likeness of a dove  
The Spirit descended, while the Father's voice  
From heaven pronounced Him His beloved Son."



athwart the darkness of ages of despotism, selfishness, and lust. The Morning Star has pierced the shades of night, and now and again has taught the nations to hope. There is a work still for John to do. Every valley is not exalted, nor every mountain and hill made low; and there is need that even now art as well as history, music<sup>1</sup> as well as science, the song as well as the pen, should proclaim and prolong the work of this great Herald of the morning.

*The General Lessons Derivable from the Career  
of John the Baptist.*

The final portion of the task I have imposed upon myself is an attempt to estimate the LESSONS derivable from the very imperfect review now taken of the various relations of John the Baptist with the kingdom of God upon earth.

I.

Something is gained for the authenticity and trustworthiness of our most precious literature, if we distinctly appreciate the historical position of John. We have seen that, independently of the evidence of the New Testament, there is sufficient reason to believe, that in the neighbourhood of the Dead Sea, certain communities of saintly, ascetic men strove to realize the kingdom of God on earth. They practised baptism, and thus expressed a desire to be delivered from sin, whether considered as a moral offence, a blood-stain, or a ceremonial impurity. Pliny, Philo, and Josephus were loud in their praise. We have found further, that

<sup>1</sup> The recently produced *Oratorio* by Mr. Macfarren is charged with fine perception of the significance of the narrative to which he has given an epic grandeur.



very similar notions on prayer, purity, self-sacrifice, and ascetic conduct of life were widely diffused throughout the East, and received a high expression in Buddhism. We have learned, on good authority, that certain Jewish sects practised daily baptism; and that some of them, with more or less of constancy, even to the present day blend their gnostic speculations and religious customs with the name of John, and call themselves his disciples. On the wings of a tradition distinct from that of the New Testament, the Mussulman reveres the name of "John the Prophet, the son of Zachary," and deprecates his death and his martyrdom. The famous and well-accredited passage in Josephus, has moreover determined on indisputable authority the leading features of his life and character. A later *Jewish* tradition has connected John with the priestly family of Aaron, and has explicitly referred Herod's conduct to indignation at John's interference with his adulterous domestic life. The differences between the biblical and the secular narratives are mutual confirmations of no small value, and the leading features of the biography and character of John (unencumbered with the strictly miraculous element) commend themselves as substantially accurate and historical, even to the most rationalistic of modern critics. So far as John represents one of the tendencies of the age in which he lived, and so far as he embodied one of its most crying necessities, and was a link between Oriental and Judaic ideas and the Christianity of (say) the end of the first century, he is an auxiliary that the student of human development cannot afford to dispense with. It is a matter of vast importance to know that the prophetic spirit of Israel



was not extinct. It is an authentic fact that a Hebrew prophet did, by moral earnestness and the adoption of a special symbolic rite, which in later times acquired enormous weight of meaning, move great multitudes in such a way as to compel the notice of Herod Antipas, Aretas, and Josephus. This cycle of facts furnishes one clue to the historic verity of the New Testament. It is readily granted that the Christ of our Gospels is seen there in familiar relations with one indubitably historic character; and since the additional information obtainable from the evangelic records is not incompatible with what we have gathered elsewhere, our confidence in other portions of the same narrative ought to rise in proportion.

We have seen, further, that the poetic character of the first chapter of Luke's Gospel does not justify our treating it as a myth; and we have tried to show, not only that it is destitute of some of the leading characteristics of a mythus, but that this hypothesis is beset with greater difficulties than the supposition of its being the work of those who were intimately acquainted with a whole cycle of wonderful events which did happen, for which the world was waiting, and the occurrence of which has revolutionized the subsequent history of mankind.

We have seen, further, that the much-vaunted incongruity between the synoptic and Johannine idea of the Baptist is capable of adequate explanation, without sacrificing either the one or the other.

If the mythic nebula be resolved into a cluster of stars, and if the entire conception of John, as gathered from all quarters, is self-consistent, I venture to maintain that it is rational and credible. If the portraiture



of John that we have thus obtained be justified, much more may follow. With it one of the chief objections to the authenticity of the fourth Gospel disappears, and the mythical hypothesis fails in a crucial illustration of its supposed power to explain the origin of the four Gospels.

## II.

A second conclusion which we may fairly draw from the entire argument is the testimony borne by it to the *originality of Christ*.

Neither Pharisaic nor Rabbinic nor Essenic philosophy contained within itself the life-stream for the refreshment of the nations. They may have been needful conditions, without which the higher life, the mysterious teaching, and the unique work of Christ would never have taken the form with which we have become familiar. Let it be clearly perceived that a few isolated sentences or gnomonic sayings of the Rabbis; that a mode of self-abnegation, which our Lord treated under certain circumstances as indispensable to the salvation of individuals; that a spiritual interpretation of certain Mosaic rites; that large and liberal views about the Sabbath and the Passover; and even that the emphasis laid in the prayers and teachings of some of these sects on holy love, do *not constitute Christianity*. These fragments of truth, these *parhelia* will not account for the brightness of the Sun of righteousness, nor unravel the mystery of the LOVE OF CHRIST. We have endeavoured to review the noblest of these teachings, to summon their brightest representative, the highest exponent of the prophetic spirit of the Old Covenant before us; we have made a special study of all that has reached us



as the outcome of his teaching and manner of life; and it has satisfied us that the wildest hyperbole could never have induced, even so rhetorical a mind as that of Apollos to have exclaimed, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge—of John the Baptist."

The prophetic gift of John, which was itself a Divine method of rousing the enthusiasm or stirring the fears of the people, did little more, after all, than gather to a focus the scattered rays which the vigorous consciences of the prophetic men of past ages had caused to shoot athwart the darkness of human life; little more than reveal the need in which the people of Israel stood of a great Saviour. In some respects John's teaching was revolutionary and sceptical of current orthodoxy. He did not, however, originate a new type of righteousness. He did not supply a new or life-giving view of the character or nature of God. He was conscious of his own transitional work, and hence his moral majesty. He knew that his mission was closed when the Sin-Bearer and the Life-Giver came, though how the prophecies he had uttered could be compatible with the grace involved in the sorrows and the love of Jesus, baffled and bewildered him.

There is an infinite difference between the God-consciousness of John and that of Jesus. To perceive the difference, is to feel the overwhelming originality of Jesus. To the world in its wild wandering from God, and to the true Israel in its cruel disappointments and with its broken heart, the great harbinger of a brighter day could do little more than say, "This is the Son of God:" "Behold the Lamb of God." But it was another thing for any human being to have replied, as



Jesus did to the assembled Sanhedrim, in answer to the question, "*Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?*" "I AM," and "THOU SAYEST THAT I AM;" or to have created in human minds the irresistible conviction that He had "come forth from God." It is undoubted—whatever Eastern sages or early Pharaohs or Roman emperors may have ever professed regarding their own divine nature—that there is nothing in human history which approximates the obvious blending of the consciousness of Jesus with that of His Father, and the proofs He gave of His supreme alliance with the Eternal Mind, and with the Infinite Power of the universe. It is true that Oriental philosophy had dreamed of Divine manifestation in human form. Much speculation had prevailed as to the relation which the Eternal, the Absolute, or the One, sustained to the temporal, the relative, and the many. The yearning of the Eastern mystics after union with the awful power of God, after identification with the eternal thought of God, called into existence the legend of numberless incarnations, and the history of gods coming down in the likeness of men. The variegated robe which Oriental and Slavonic fancy has thrown round the great powers of nature, and the humanification of the physical forces, have evoked many *Sagas*, of charm both superb and grotesque. The Egyptian Pharaohs were accustomed to do homage to the divinity of their own nature, and the haughty theocrats of Persia dared to call on their subjects to adore them. But in all these cases one factor of the synthesis—the humanity—was overshadowed and absorbed by the supposed divinity. The manhood was lost in the nimbus of celestial glory. The result of the conjectural incarnation was



neither God nor man, and did not become a renovating source of moral and religious life to humanity. Nor does the Roman deification of heroes and kings present a just parallel to the claims of Jesus. Doubtless the Western figment and practice of apotheosis served for a time to retard the degradation of the old paganism to a mere fetishism ; but they helped at last to explode and shatter the temples of the gods, and they to some extent prepared the way for the reception of a truth which had been shadowed forth imperfectly and darkly in the popular superstitions.

Jesus accepted the sublime appellation, "Son of God," and proved that His willingness to do so was rooted in an awful depth of conscious verity. He met the great need of humanity in this stupendous admission, because it was supplemented by the lofty and perfect expression He gave, at the same time, to the ideal of humanity. It is the incomparable sympathy with man of Him who said, "I and my Father are one," which has made Him the Head of the race, the Life and Light of the world.

John discerned some of these features, but he did not emulate them. He saw the King in His beauty, he perceived beneath the exterior semblance of the MAN some flashing of those imperial splendours which have since enlightened the world, but he was not the King of men, nor was he "that light." It was one thing to feel the awe of the approaching sacrifice, to comprehend the mystery of the Lord's temptation, and to forecast the bridal of earth and heaven ; but it was another thing to rule royally by the might of sympathy, and to sway the sceptre of love. It was one thing to cry, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh



away the sin of the world ;" it was another to exclaim confidently, " If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink : " " The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." The Baptist made the grand discovery that " he who was from above was above all." He knew that in some way Jesus would fulfil the significance of the prophetic and the ceremonial LAMB, and would bear away the sin of the world; but it was left for Jesus to show, by dying, by sacrificing that wondrous life of His, in deference to the curse resting upon the nature which He had taken into union with His own, that death could become the true life, that precious blood thus shed could be the life-stream for the world. Christ's language about His own death and the significance of it, when He teaches His disciples to regard it as a new event in the universe, as war made upon the power of evil, as a mode of casting out the prince of this world, as a ransom for many, is so marvellously in advance of the Baptist's teaching, that we can never feel the independence of the career and mission of Jesus so strongly as when bringing it side by side with the great prophetic spirit who felt the advent, heralded the approach, and prepared the way of the Lord.

That we should find a few of the words of John on the lips of Jesus is what the whole burden of the narrative and the relation between these two leads us to expect; but these very terms, " repentance," " remission of sin," " kingdom of God," " Son of God," " wrath to come," have all acquired a depth and fulness of meaning from the words and work of the Lord Jesus, which the teaching of John not only could not supply,



but did not approach. John was distinctly aware that he was not the Christ. He repeatedly repudiated the dignity which his disciples appear to have proffered. He had a clear idea of his function and of the limitations of his work. He did not hush the garrulous repetition of his own claims by unthinking disciples; nay, he was jealous of them. He would not have the joy taken from him of being the "friend of the Bridegroom," but he never allowed popular enthusiasm to muse even in silence on the delusion that he was "the Christ." He gave living, vehement, explicit utterance to the need of the people. He found a voice for their "unutterable groaning." He expressed with matchless force and energy the moral weakness and peril of the nation, and exposed the hypocrisy of the religious classes; he revealed the urgent need of a new kind of grace and help, but there he paused. He was conscious of utter inability to supply the void which he disclosed. He had the prophetic gift, but he knew that the nation, and indeed the universal heart of man, needed more than the appearance of a new prophet. It had wearied of burning words and flashes of prediction. It had been stunned by the blows which had fallen on its hardened heart, and the melancholy disaster which had crushed its fairest hopes. John knew, and Jesus taught, that something more than a prophet was required—One wiser than Solomon, greater than Jonah, more mighty than even Elias. There was needed the creation of a new kind of man, the regeneration of the Spirit of God, the gift of eternal life.

John was a sage: he had in early manhood assumed the garb of the ascetic community which embodied many of the speculations and habits and counsels of



perfection of the great sages and recluses of the East. He had gathered together, as in a focus, the wisdom of the Aryans and the traditions of the Semites ; but he found them all to fail when fairly brought face to face with the great evils of humanity. He saw a wrath coming which he could not avert, a kingdom and an order of things approaching which he was incompetent to direct. The world was wearying of speculations : it wanted facts. Metaphysics and science had done their utmost, ascetic contemplation had led to the extinction of some of the integral elements of human nature, and to grave suspicions of the supremacy of goodness. Dualism was threatening to undermine the faith of men in the Creator and Preserver of the world, Pantheism to obscure the vision of the living God, and foreclose all access to Him. The speculations of Oriental philosophy tended to establish the unreality of all phenomena, and to coerce consciousness into a repudiation of its most essential, its primal deliverance. Evil was being charged upon matter, and thus man was rendered irresponsible for his own disobedience. John took the part of a true sage. He awakened conscience and revealed the ideal law of human life, but he did not meet the exceeding bitter cry for help except by pointing to the Coming Man, to the Christ. Christ's essential originality consisted in His being and doing that for which all the sages of the East, all the philosophers of the West, had cried out, but hitherto had cried in vain. Buddha had essayed to unriddle the problem and relieve the misery of life by proclaiming its unreality and illusion, and all the ascetic schools had more or less pursued the methods which were calculated not only to condemn the lusts of the flesh, but



to suppress and stifle the emotions which constitute the largest part of the nature of man. Christ conferred intense reality on these emotions, and claimed the whole of man for God. He extinguished base *desire* by quickening a heavenly *desire*, and proffering a Divine object to the strongest affection. Dualistic speculation steals over the mind, whenever it is left to grapple unaided with the resistless force of things, of evil customs and inherited propensities, and the law of the punishment of sin by sin. The divorce of nature from God, and the deadly blight of virtue and piety involved in the identification of evil with matter, have been agelong perils of the human race. I do not charge John with the error, but I maintain that he did little to arrest or confute it. The Incarnation is the sublime reply, and indeed the only response to the delusion. The life and death, the flesh and blood, the burial and resurrection of Christ, are the answer of God to the self-deception of the world.

A few Ebionitic, Essenic, or Johannine injunctions are discovered by certain writers, in the language of Jesus to the seventy disciples, and in the unworldly injunctions of the Sermon on the Mount. If we admit that in this case, as in many others, our Lord recognized the good, the available elements in the current social, theological, and ecclesiastical systems, we cannot fail to see that the whole burden and spirit of His teaching transcends them as far as the meaning of the Eucharist does that of the Passover. He was clearly giving to the seventy disciples and to the twelve apostles, on their experimental mission, regulations of a temporary kind, to test their faith and prepare them for a different and a world-wide ministry. The vast



majority of His parables—apart from the special lessons they convey—show how tenaciously He held the sanctity of nature, the Divine forces ever at work in it and in man. Indeed, what has been called “Christian Pantheism” has even cited our Lord as the supreme example of one who identified the All with God, and who knew that His consciousness and the Father’s were one. This latter statement is made with the apparent idea of showing Christ to be the Chief of all Pantheists. It has been said by Mr. Picton, that on this hypothesis a rational idea of His life has yet to be written! Let it be honestly tried with the material now at our disposal, and we shall see that the “Father” of Christ is infinitely more than the “All” of nature, the “All in all” of Pantheism. While Jesus claimed to be “one” with the Father, and to be the revelation of the Father, and the Giver of the Comforter to men, He most distinctly discriminated the mind of God, the working of God, the will of God, from His own human mind and will and working. He proclaimed, moreover, the existence of an evil spirit opposed to God. He charged human nature with evil, and asserted that while in its noblest form, and when discharging its grandest functions, it still needed redemption; and in a method essentially distinct from that of either Oriental sage or Essenic philosopher, He proceeded to deliver, not Himself, but the human race from the bondage of sin. It is what Christ was, and knew and said that He was, which contrasts so mightily with what John the Baptist knew and said of himself. John’s teaching was one of the conditions by which the teaching of Christ became more comprehensible to human intelligence. He came before Him to prepare His way; but John



was *not* the Christ, nor did the essential features of Christ's mission reproduce or merely intensify or enlarge the teaching and position of John. It has served the purpose of many theorists to thin down the distinction between the mission, character, education, and position of John and those of Christ—to exalt John at the expense of Christ. Nothing is wanted but a thorough consideration of the true functions of John, in order to disabuse the mind of such a misconception. When Jesus came into the world, as great a fact occurred as when the first man appeared upon the scene. The very points in which John approached Him, and provoked comparison with Him, are those which reveal the fundamental uniqueness of the Christ. John was a divinely-sent prophet. He belonged to that marvellous group of men to whose ideal of righteousness and of the kingdom of God the world owes a debt of eternal gratitude. Human nature *per se* is insufficient to account for their strange and marvellous influence upon mankind.

However, while in view of the existence of the Hebrew theocracy and institutions, of the prophetic order, of the priestly rank, of the national expectations often so cruelly blighted, we admit that the career of John becomes more explicable; yet, on the other hand, the entire Old Testament history, and the culmination of it in John, are altogether insufficient to account for the life and claims of Christ and the doctrine which He taught. To use John's own words, "There cometh one after me mightier than I, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose." "He that is from above is above all."



## III.

A third general conclusion to be derived from this investigation is the superiority of the kingdom of God, as revealed in the life and work of Christ, to the Old Covenant, which in the days of John the Baptist was waxing old and ready to vanish away.

Christ, while bearing His emphatic testimony to John, magnified the LAW.<sup>1</sup> He declared that heaven and earth might pass away rather than the smallest fragment of the law fall to the ground; and in reference to the charge on which Herod had imprisoned the Baptist, He added, "Whosoever putteth away his wife and marrieth another, committeth adultery; and he that marrieth her that has been put away by her husband, committeth adultery." As much as to say, "The law of God must be revered, at all hazards its lofty standard of perfect manhood must be vindicated. The kingdom is not established on the abrogation of the law, but on its fulfilment." He had come to fulfil the whole law. Only "the least in the kingdom of heaven" would trifle with the letter of the law, in their eagerness to proclaim the spirit. The obedience He came to render and inspire, issuing from the possession of the Spirit which had given the law, would embrace it in all its fulness, and would exceed the righteousness of the scribe and Pharisee. Among those born of women there hath not risen a greater than John, in his utterance and vindication of the *law*. The rabbinical glosses on the law, the traditional interpretation, the practical evisceration or modification of the Mosaic legislation by carnal or cere-

<sup>1</sup> Luke xvi. 17. Cf. Matt. v. 17, 18. Tholuck, *Commentary on Sermon on the Mount*, E. T. *in loc.*; Fairbairn, *Revelation of Law*, p. 223, ff.



monial additions, by which the law of God was made void, were severely condemned.<sup>1</sup> John's method of proclaiming the sanctity of the law had made him tower above the entire school of the contemporary Rabbis. His free, bold, self-sacrificing utterance of the law of God, had lifted him immeasurably above the punctilious defenders of the oral traditions. Sent by God to arouse the conscience of Israel, he had attacked the practical immorality of the boasting traditionalist, and had bearded the voluptuous tetrarch on his throne. Our Lord magnified the law, recognized its highest functions and its grandest embodiment. Further, Christ vindicated on numerous occasions the function and dignity of the PROPHEPIC ORACLES. The prophets had prepared His way, they had from the first been the great corrective force in Judaism. They had torn off the mask from hypocritical literalism, and called attention to the spirituality, the humanity, the eternal and unalterable significance of the law which underlay the laborious system of symbols which they endured with only partially-restrained impatience. They had foretold the coming of the kingdom and the King, and now a greater than the whole of the prophets had arisen—one who conceived of the Messiah and His kingdom in a higher and more spiritual sense than they had done; one who, moreover, had discerned in Himself the true Son of God, the King of Israel, the Baptizer with the Holy Spirit: and our Lord declared that John was a prophet and more than a prophet; yet notwithstanding the lofty dignity assigned by Jesus to the Baptist, He unhesitatingly placed him on the threshold of the kingdom, and not within it. He who was greater

<sup>1</sup> Matt. v. 21, 27, 33, 38; xv. 1-20; xxiii. 16-23.



than those who sit in Moses' seat, and more effective in his work than the utterers of all the ancient oracles, was in the judgment of Jesus less than the least of those who had really justified Eternal wisdom. The defects, the official inferiority (not the subjective moral weakness) of John, the relative imperfection of his standpoint— notwithstanding its being the culmination of the Old Testament economy—reveal in brilliant light the extraordinary independence of the Christ and His kingdom. Christ was not the development of Judaism, not the mere expander of ideas that lay in their seed-form in the old faith. He came with a new revelation. The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came (were) by Jesus Christ. Christ reproduced and reasserted all the ancient promises of God. He fulfilled and established the venerable law. He was the true Priest, Prophet, Nazarite, Baptist, King, Sacrifice, Temple, Sabbath, of the older covenant, but He was infinitely more, and He knew that He was. His disciples proclaimed Him as "the Son of God," as "the Word made flesh," as "the Prince of life," as "the Lord of all."

Christianity was not a reformation of Judaism. It was the *διορθώσις*,<sup>1</sup> the right and full setting forth of its own hidden significance. Christ was the *diorthosis* of the temple and the Sabbath and the Priesthood, of the various functions of the prophetic order, of the ascetic community and of the sacrificial ritual. The life of Christ on earth was the tabernacle of God with men. He that had seen Him had seen the Father. His delight in the Divine will, His entrance into rest, was the fact of which the Sabbath was an enduring

<sup>1</sup> Heb. ix. 10. See *Argument of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, by the late George Steward, p. 290, ff.



type. The offering of His body once for all was a priestly act which transcended the accumulated sacrifices of a thousand years. It meant and accomplished more for humanity than all of these combined. He was the "Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world." The ministration of *death* was glorious, but it had no glory by reason of the glory of the ministration of righteousness. The ministration of the *body*, its specific rules, restrictions, articulation, and order, were glorious; all the sumptuous splendour of its ceremonial, all the satisfaction thus rendered to the great craving of human nature after the outward manifestation and the definite rule; all the grandeur of its robing and all the harmony of its songs were glorious; but in comparison with the gift of the Spirit—the dispensation of the Holy Ghost—it waxed old and was ready to vanish away. The ministration of the *letter* that killeth was glorious. Nothing else before Christ can compare with the moral excellence and vigour of the Mosaic and prophetic law. It was holy, just, and good; but it was law, and not life. It could slay, but could not save. "When the commandment came, sin revived." "The law was added even (*χάριν*) for the sake of transgressions." It turned sinful principles into acts of open disobedience. It fanned the flame of passion into rebellion. "I had not known sin (said Paul), except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." The letter killed. The thunder of denunciation broke in terrible peals over the troubled heart. The light that flashed from the shrine of the Old Covenant burned up the souls of men. It was the power and glory of a carnal commandment, not the power of an endless life. He who came that we "might



have life, and have it more abundantly," to "give eternal life," to make living water leap up and flow for ever from the innermost depths of the human soul ; He who came to set us free from the bondage of the letter, from the fear of death, from the tutelage and harsh guardianship of a stereotyped ceremonialism, was clothed with a glory that reduces that of the "letter," that of the *dying* and *killing* "form," that of the gorgeous but moribund "body," to a vanishing point. The light of the morning star, the flashing of the aurora, the gleam of the lightning, the artificial illumination of the night, may all give us some hint of what the dawning of the day may reveal ; but the Sun of Righteousness, the Light of the World, is more than all. Christ is not the development of Hebrew faith, the outgrowth or forth-putting of its hidden powers. He is the Dayspring from on high. He came down from heaven.

But more than this, the new life He gave is more than all the gift of law and ordinance and letter. John may have been the development of these. He brought them to their highest expression. He made evident, by the intensity of his moral convictions, by the clearness of his conscience, by the brilliance of his prophetic insight, and by the self-sacrifice of his spirit, the awful need of the soul of man. The highest types of Rabbinism, in their tender fancy, in their noble passion, in their lofty patriotism, in the reflections of the new light that had shone into the deep recesses of the Jewish schools, have carried forward the work of John in the religious education of the most extraordinary people on the face of the earth ; but the least in the kingdom of heaven are greater than these, in the deep springs of their life, in the



quality of their graces, in the perpetuity of their privileges.

The Christian life in its most elementary and essential features transcends the spirit and the functions of the Old Covenant even in the highest form in which these were providentially exhibited to the world. The body of the believer in Christ becomes a temple more sacred than that on Zion. The Sabbatism, the rest conferred by the Lord on those who take His yoke upon them, is a more intimate fellowship with God than was secured by the most strenuous literalism and Sabbath-keeping. The priesthood of every one who offers spiritual and living sacrifice of self to the will of God, dispensing with all sacerdotal functions except those fulfilled by the risen Lord, transcends all the priestly ceremonial, and is not a development but a fulfilment of its significant ritual. Union to Christ by spiritual acts of living faith is death to sin and life unto God, a conscious participation in the death of Christ and in His resurrection. In the cross of Christ the Christian is crucified, and he is risen again by faith of the operation of God which raised Him from the dead. He has died and risen from the dead, and his life is hidden in God as Christ is hidden in the Eternal Light.

There were moreover great limitations in the ancient prophetic gift. The mystic vision, the Divine call, the subtle and untraced sources of the heavenly unction of the prophets of old, were grandly reproduced in the last of the prophets of Israel. But in the dispensation of the Spirit all are prophetic. All the Lord's people are prophets. The Holy Ghost is shed forth abundantly. A stream of living water, clear as crystal, issues from the throne of God and of the Lamb. "Ex-



cept a man is born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." When so born, when he has received the "unction of the Holy One," he too is a son of God, an heir of God, a joint-heir with Christ. The fulness from which he draws inspiration, the law of the Spirit of life of which he is the illustration, the strength of his hope, the beginning of his triumph, are all crowded into his consciousness. The old prophet is only one type of the new life. Prophetism has its *diorthosis* in the powers of the endless life. The witness of the Spirit that we are sons of God, the full assurance of faith, and the heaven opened to the eye of faith, transcend the visions and break up the limitations of the goodly fellowship of the prophets. "We ALL, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even by the Spirit of the Lord."

#### IV.

A further conclusion, that I believe has been more or less established in the course of this discussion, is that the Church of Christ has preserved in its organization and theology several elements of the Old Covenant, which received legitimate expression in the mission of the Baptist, but which are due to him, or to those tendencies of which he was the highest development, rather than to Christ or His apostles. It may become a very serious inquiry whether in these respects the Church has not departed from its faith and deprived itself of the elements of strength. In some cases, the prolongation of the Johannine dispensation has been simply the exaggeration of what is common to the Old Covenant and the New; it arises from the undue em-



phasis that some have laid upon what is temporary and transitional, introductory, and imperfect in form. In other cases it has been due to the puerile and sensuous condition of those to whom it makes its appeal.

Although the teaching of John, as far as it went, embodied eternal truth; though his words were words of fiery love, and expressed the thoughts of God, and though his definite assurances were added to the sum of things, became the heirloom of humanity, and may be regarded as a portion of the Divine Oracle — a page of that Scripture which is given by inspiration of God—it would be perilous to Christianity to suppose that they constitute the revelation of God in Christ. Several extremes of theological opinion and philosophic speculation have, however, unfortunately coincided in representing the Johannine message and dispensation as of the essence of the kingdom and gospel of Christ.

(1) Those who have urged the position that Christianity is simply the re-edition, either of the law of nature or of the law of Moses, and who speak of it as being “as old as the creation,” or as embodied in the religious ideas or systems of the East, or who regard it as an etherealized or vitalized morality, as “morality touched by emotion,” as the manifestation of “a stream of tendency which makes for righteousness,” as identical with Buddhistic, Ethnic, Essenic ideals, or Stoical philosophy; who can see nothing essentially loftier or better in it than they can find in the best side of the Talmud, or in the speculations of Marcus Aurelius or the maxims of Seneca or Epictetus; and further, those who measure Christian missions and their efficacy by the degree in which the heathen



tribes have adopted something like Christian morality, and clothed themselves in the garb of a moral civilization ; these all seem to me to have been confounding a temporary, ancillary, preparatory dispensation with the true essence of Christianity, and to resemble those who saw the grandiose form of the Baptist, heard him speak, and, being baptized with his baptism, have as yet learned no more of the Lord.

(2) Ceremonialism and symbolic ritual have received a development in certain forms of both Eastern and Western Christianity which has threatened to extinguish its vitality. The hierarchy has needed, for the justification of its own existence, the right to perform undemonstrable prodigies, and generation after generation has added to the pomp and mystery of a ritual which has conferred distinction upon an ORDER of men apart from their moral fitness or spiritual worth. Virtues have been attributed to common things when in the hands of the privileged class, to words spoken by official persons, to gestures executed by certain individuals presumably endowed with supernatural powers of conferring grace, not one of which do they inherently possess. Symbols have multiplied with the craving for an authentication of purely imaginary claims. The poor puppet of an ORDER, covering himself with symbolic dress, and standing on an imaginary elevation, has ostentatiously assumed to hold the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and presumptuously claimed to know and execute the designs of the Almighty.

The Lord Jesus Christ embodied the whole ideal of the Hebrew priesthood, fulfilled the typical meaning of its sacrifices, and declared Himself to be "greater



than the temple." His earliest disciples enunciated the universality of the Christian priesthood, the duty of each believer to be a sacrificing priest, the fact that the body of each believer was a temple of God, and proclaimed the access of the whole Church "by one spirit unto the Father." The readoption, by the Christian Society, of the sacramental and sacerdotal system after the new life had repudiated it and outgrown its trammels, is one of the most melancholy facts in the history of the world.

Great emphasis was doubtless laid by John on baptism with water, yet even he never confounded it with a spiritual process, and always spoke of the spiritual baptism as infinitely transcending any symbolic lustration he could effect. The apostles laid little emphasis on the mere *rite*, and though they practised it, they did not confound it or suppose it inseparably connected with the Spirit-baptism. It has been left for after ages to exaggerate even the Johannine emphasis on the sacrament, and thus to pervert the spiritual character of Christianity. Though glorious efforts have been made to throw off the bondage of ceremony and the tyranny of priestcraft, to establish the grand truth of individual self-responsibility, and to proclaim the personal relation of every soul of man with the living God; yet the attraction of symbolical ceremony and the charms of hierarchical pretension have been too strong even for the awakened intellect and cultured powers of the human race. The claims of self-constituted vicegerents of heaven have gone on augmenting with every fresh indication of the credulity of mankind, but they have provoked new antagonisms, angry remonstrances, and repeated schisms. The illimitable incongruity of pro-



fessing to accomplish results in the region of the spiritual, unseen and eternal, by symbolic rites in the region of the purely material and temporal, will before long become conspicuous to all. Meanwhile, wherever we turn we mark some signs of this great perversion of the gospel. The most consistent of all, are perhaps those who make their pilgrimage to Palestine and bathe in the waters of the Jordan; but he that is least in the Kingdom is greater than even he who baptized the Messiah in those waters. I have already described the legitimate place which ritual and sacrament occupy in the kingdom of God, but our whole discussion warns us against magnifying the ritual of worshipping love, into the indispensable channel of Divine grace, against substituting the ceremonies of the infancy of the Kingdom for the life of God in the soul.

(3) The extraordinary emphasis which the career of John impressed on *asceticism as a rule of life* compels me to refer once more to the contrast in this respect between the law of John and the law of Christ, between the life of John and the life of Christ. We do not undervalue the career of the great solitaries of the wilderness, the self-control of the hermit, the self-sacrifice of the noble anchorites who devoted their life to the benefit of mankind, and found joy and love and light in their solemn seclusion, in their holy work, and their life-long repudiation of the flesh and the world. There are those now who are able to "receive" the most extreme ascetic rule for the sake of Christ. To their own Master they stand or fall, but the relation of John to the kingdom of God compels us to recognize a higher kind of man. The law of the eremite and the coenobite corresponds with the transitory dispensation



of John. He called into brilliant prominence an ethnic custom; he sanctified it for a while by his example; but this method of life is pre-Christian, and has in it no essential element of the Divine life or the ministration of the Spirit. There is a yearning prevalent on many sides after what is called catholic custom and venerable rule, a system which sets at nought the laws of brotherhood and the claims of parental love, and tends to the destruction of true manhood, and to the creation of the spirit of the slave rather than that of the child. This is often recommended to us as the higher *Christian* life, and as a "counsel of perfection," as "the way of peace," and as the "law of Christ." The history of the precursors of John's asceticism has shed some light on the real origin of monastic rule. The modern revival of it reveals the deep unrest produced alike by the excitement of speculative thought and the fierce and heated urgency of worldly business, and it proclaims the need of that Spirit-baptism of which the great forerunner spoke; but the drivelling weakness to which it reduces strong men, and the degradation which Christianity suffers at its hand, force us to ask if either its advocates or its victims have "so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost"?

Though he that was least in the kingdom of heaven was greater than John, there were nevertheless principles of transcendent force and truths of perpetual significance embodied in his ministry, by a brief enumeration of which I shall conclude this discussion.

### I.

John was the great preacher of righteousness. He enunciated a few undying principles, he urged with



fiery earnestness, upon his fellow-countrymen, the necessity of right conduct, of godly living, of self-control. It was in this way that he reproduced the spirit of the prophetic order. He quickened the conscience by authoritative appeal to the Divine sanctions of right. He assumed that there would be an immediate response in conscience to his voice. The law for him was no dead letter, but was the utterance of the will of God. He boldly attacked the moral degeneracy and profligacy of his age. The religious sects, the public officials, the titled monarch, the willing disciple, were all compelled to measure themselves by the law. Moreover, he did not hesitate to declare that the law of right was defended by sanctions of the most fearful kind. The axe, the fan, the fire, the curse, the wrath to come, were the weapons which he, like the prophets of old, wielded with persistence and terrible effect. The terrorism of his teaching was one of its striking features. Seeing as he did the invisible, alive as he was to the crushing forces of violated law, he spoke of that which he knew. His imagination, vivid as the lightning, created the most fearful images of Divine vengeance, and scathed and shattered where it could not melt the hearts of men. He was not so terrible in the administration of judgment as Moses was, nor did he call down fire from heaven like Elijah, nor did he elaborate his curse like Jeremiah or Ezekiel or Malachi; but he reproduced the attitude and the leading characteristics of all the great preachers of righteousness. It must, moreover, never be forgotten that in this respect he does but anticipate one aspect of the work of the Great Teacher and Saviour and Judge of the world. No preachers have been more severe in their utterance



of the law of righteousness, than our Lord and His apostles. The law, as conceived and proclaimed by Jesus Christ, was more comprehensive and searching than it was in the hand of Moses. He showed that it embraced the religion of motive as well as of conduct; that the "heart" as well as the outward life was exposed to its condemnation. The lascivious glance and the cherished purpose of revenge were classed by Him with adultery and murder. The fires of Sodom were threatened against unbelief and impenitence—the fall of Tyre and Sidon was appealed to as the great analogue of the national judgment about to fall upon the holy people. To hear, and not to do the sayings of Jesus, was to incur utter confusion. For men to reject them was to die in their sins. Swift death would fall upon the impenitent, and the most terrible figures of speech were used by Him to describe the condition of the soul of man when thus ushered, or hurried into the presence of the supreme Lawgiver.

Paul and Peter, James, John, and Jude, repeated in the same tones the unchangeable laws of righteousness, the fearful consequences which attend the non-realization of the perfect ideal of manhood. John the Baptist did but hand on to them the blazing torch of prophetic judgment upon all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men. It is thus that he prepared the way of the Lord, and thus the Lord has ever since continued to prepare His own way to the consciences and hearts of men. Not only do the apostles and the first preachers of the gospel, but the evangelists and apologists of later times continuously lift up the same warning voice. It is of the very essence of the kingdom of God to know that a day of righteous judgment is ever



about to dawn, "when God will render to every man according to his work." Unless the standard and test of true righteousness, holy living, upright conduct, were applicable under the gospel as they were under the law, there would have been no relation between them. But Christ came not to destroy but to fulfil the law.

So far then there is a legitimate prolongation of the ministry of the Baptist. It is still needful to proclaim the Divine standard of righteousness, to spur and whip the conscience into activity by the demands of the law. The ministry of the New Covenant cannot dispense with the broad facts of the righteous judgment of God. It is still of consummate moment that it should "cry aloud and spare not," that it should show God's people their transgressions and the world around them its sins. The missionary of the Cross is always a preacher of righteousness: he must denounce iniquity, and summon conscience to his side in the great conflict with the world, the flesh, and the devil. It is a grievous misapprehension of his mission if he soothes the ungodly and the sensual, the idolater and the liar, with words of peace when there is no peace; if he blinks the terrors of the Lord, as though they were the dreams of a weak or morbid fancy; if he turns away from the thought of judgment, and offers apologies for the righteous Lord, who loveth righteousness and hateth iniquity. There is no truce possible with sin. It cannot be explained away as a mistake, as a venial ignorance, as an illusion, as the obverse of good, as the harmless shadow cast by the finite upon the All, as the inseparable accident of responsibility, as the interesting accompaniment of humanity, as a lesser good in itself, as one of the modes in which the infinite



life has manifested itself. The entire discussion of the relation of John to the kingdom of God is charged with this lesson—that sin, though permitted by God, is hateful to Him, abominable in His sight, and deserves to be condemned and punished by the vigorous activity of conscience, and by the laws of the government of God. All prophets and all prophetic men are banded together to expose and denounce it. John was one of these, and we have still to do his work. He was the type of the “law-work” of the kingdom of God, nor must we dare to repudiate the validity of such service.

There are some who are still under the law of Moses: there are a larger number who are still under the law of nature. Not a few have transformed the gospel into a law or into a carnal commandment, and have received the spirit of bondage and terror. All these make their boast of a law which they imagine themselves to have received and obeyed. They have only partially conceived it. They are soothing themselves with the mere possession of the law. It is transformed into a salvo to conscience, by which others are condemned rather than self rectified. Some are so weak in will and so corrupt in habit, that the principle of obedience, the life of love, the inward law of the living Spirit, is inconceivable to them. They are kept in garrison by the law, they are in their nonage, in the infancy of the Divine life. They cannot understand or appreciate a religious idea or principle which does not come to them under the form of some definite rule. They are under the law. Before they can receive the Spirit, before they are ready to receive the Christ, before they can know anything of the baptism with the Holy Ghost,



they still need the ministry of the Baptist. The preacher of righteousness must show them the reality and force of that law wherein they are held. They must be compelled to cry, "Who will deliver us?" Much self-righteousness and self-complacency must be disturbed in their insane security by the thunder-peal of the prophet. Respectable vices, which take shelter under the eaves of the Church, need nothing so much as the stern iconoclast, the keen satirist, the practical moralist, who loathes hypocrisy, who is independent of smiles, curses, or tears, and who never ceases to cry aloud against all unrighteousness and dishonour, and against whatsoever loveth or maketh a lie.

It will be of disastrous augury to the Christian Church if inadequate views of sin are allowed to prevail in it; if disloyal treatment of the Divine ideal of righteousness, or extenuation of man's rebellion against the just judgment of God, be tolerated. We need no new prophet to tell us that if lawlessness be treated as independence; if the consequences of sin are trifled with; if the corrupt dispositions of men are regarded as any palliation of gross compliance with temptation; if Christian conscience is afraid to condemn character as well as conduct; if the holy will of the living God is arraigned at the bar of scientific research; if the physical antecedents of transgression be supposed to obliterate responsibility; if involuntarily or wilfully acquired disease is cited as the explanation and condonation of deliberate vice or overt trespass,—then the moral fibre of this generation will be paralysed and the doom of millions sealed, and the curse pronounced on those "who call evil, good," will fall upon us.

It must be admitted with grief that the very terms



“right” and “wrong” are passing out of some ethical vocabularies as antiquated delusions, and are being condemned as theologic nomenclature. A blatant, insolent materialism threatens to engulf moral distinctions, and to plunge the fairest thing of earth into the darkest abyss of perdition. There is no grand reality of morals, no truth of revelation, no fact of the government of God, which is not darkened and distorted by this blinding and poisonous exhalation of the philosophy of the (carnal) human mind.

If these vague and pernicious views of sin and law, and the moral order of the universe, be entertained, revelation becomes needless, the promise of reconciliation with the Source of violated order is superfluous, Atonement is a work of supererogation, and the renewal of humanity a vapid and foolish dream. Our view of the whole doctrine of Christ is undoubtedly shaped by the feelings which are entertained by us as to the peccancy of sin ; by the sentiment cherished by us with reference to our own hearts' weakness and the follies of our own life, and by the estimate we form of the sin of the world. It seems to me that the prime message of John, the accumulated “voice” of all the prophets and the law, as reasserted in his commission, was echoed by Christ and His apostles, and that it is imperatively needed at this moment. If there was any truth in his “baptism,” if it was “from heaven,” then this most essential element of it will bear repetition now. We must still ask the question, “Who may abide the day of his coming ?” We may still revert to the prophets of God with the cry, “What must we do ?”



## II.

While John was the preacher of righteousness, he was the herald of the future. It cannot be said that all the future which he foresaw, has become for us as yet either the present, or the past. The Christian Church and the Divine life in Christ are throughout their entire sphere prophetic, and still look forward to a more perfect day. Finality is not the dream nor the hope of the child of God. The Christian looks for a yet greater and more satisfying manifestation of the kingdom and power of the Lord Jesus ; he expects and declares his conviction of the doom which will fall on every institution, on every nation, on every soul, that refuses to receive the kingdom of God. The New Testament from end to end is charged with the hope of a tremendous and sublime future, which was as yet unrealized when the last of the apostles laid down his pen. The way of the Lord still demands a Johanne preparation. We need to-day a prolonged and powerful iteration of the cry, "The Lord will come." In what manner the convincing proof of His supreme authority and awful Presence shall be given to the world, it is not for us to say. It is not for us "to know the times or the seasons" or the methods of its manifestation ; whether through overwhelming argument, or resistless Providence, or the vividness of a universal intuition ; whether all who have pierced Him will have the eyes of seers, and see Him ; or whether the occurrence of tremendous cataclysms and world-wide cosmic changes will reveal Him to the eyes of all. But one function of the Church is still, with John, to prepare mankind for His coming, to herald His approach, and to quicken the hope of the world. John did not know,



nor has any one of the goodly fellowship of the prophets known precisely the work he was himself doing in holding out the torch of prophecy towards the darkness of the future. No age, however bright its "vision and faculty divine," has fully understood the real part it was taking in the education of the after ages. But each generation has nevertheless been a link between that which has gone and that which is to come. Some men have had mighty though unconscious influence on all succeeding times; but none have exerted so much sway on those that followed them as the men whose prophetic insight, hope, and prediction, have been the strongest.

Let the Church of Christ renew its hope, and be more confident of the future. Without a loftier ideal, without the hope of a more abundant "manifestation," of a more "glorious appearing," of the "new heavens and the new earth," the faith of the Church would have stagnated, and the fire of its zeal would have been quenched. There is much to repress joyous and confident expectation. The prophets of doubt, the false prophets of the spirit of the world, are eagerly proclaiming the fall of the Christ, and heralding the republic of humanity in place of the tottering kingdom of God. Let those who have by grace looked through the mists of doubt and *seen* the King in His beauty, proclaim with urgent and reiterated cry the coming of the world's jubilee, the triumph and the glory of the Lord of all.

### III.

John was the interpreter and prophet of Divine interposition. He became the powerful instrument in God's hand for convincing the men of his day that the hope of the world was not to be found in the development of



Judaism or the education or evolution of nature, but in the grace of God. The hope he heralded was the work of the King, the Judge, the Christ, the Son, the Lamb, the Bridegroom, the Holy Ghost. So far we have to perpetuate and repeat his assurance. Whatever names the Church gives to the personal communion of the soul with the living God, as the Redeemer, Sanctifier, and Judge of men, it must preserve the reality of this conviction.

The so-called scientific spirit seeks in humanity and in nature, and even in physical force and matter, for the entire reserve of energy which is to eventuate in the realization of all its hopes. The "cosmos" cannot and never will satisfy the longing of a man who is "born from above," who is conscious of the Divine life, who knows that he was dead but is alive again, and that he is recreated in Christ. The very heart and core of John's strength was that he knew that "nature" was not "grace," that "grace" was not "nature." In this respect there is a foreshadowing in his mission of the eternal distinction between the dead and the living; between man as he is by himself, and man baptized with the Holy Ghost; between the "cosmos" and "the living God;" between the flesh and the Spirit; between the infinite complexity, mechanism, and conflicts of human life, and the spontaneous and glorious liberty of the sons of God.

#### IV.

John was the instrument and precursor of a REVIVAL of religion. He was the originator and personal occasion of one of the most remarkable outbursts of religious feeling of which we have any record, and he foresaw the complement of his own influence in the mysteries



of Pentecost. This is hardly the place even to touch upon the question—Are such renewals of humanity the law of the kingdom of heaven? I dare not handle it in its widest relations, nor travel beyond the narrow limits of my present discussion. John associated the coming of the King, the manifestation of the kingdom, with the outpouring of the Spirit and the fiery baptism. The deep impression which his prophetic message produced, prepared untold thousands for the reception of a great spiritual change, which breathed around them a new and subtle atmosphere of thought, filled them with new ideas, infused new habits of life, inspired an enthusiasm for unseen and eternal things, a passionate love of man, a victory over self, a triumph over death, and a mysterious joy in the face of persecution and martyrdom, which have revolutionized the world.

And even now that the work of the Spirit has renewed men after this type, and the royalty of Christ has been recognized, and societies of men have been fashioned on a common faith in this great power, the ordinary and constant operations of grace do apparently retire within narrow limits. The stream of living water contracts its swell. Those who are wise and energetic may forsake their early love. The strain of intense yearning over the new generation ever pressing into life may be relaxed. Compassion over the lost may cease to fuse and fire the souls of men. Philosophy may take the place of piety, and cynicism expel strong emotion. The world may threaten to overcome the faith of God's elect, and the Church need again and again the renewal of the Holy Ghost.

Under these sources of depression the great promise of the Spirit-baptism is the brightest hope that the



Church can ever cherish. It is no dishonour to the Holy Ghost, if we seek and expect the renewal of high tides and copious showers of blessing, if we long and wait for the descent of His Power from on high.

We cannot read the past history of the Church without seeing that it is a law of the spirit of life that great multitudes of men should at times be moved by the contagion of a common faith in the unseen. God does revive His work in the midst of the years. He sheds His Holy Spirit upon men in showers of mercy, and He floods the river of life with abounding fulness. The Spirit of God does now occasionally reveal Christ in a manner which altogether transcends the ordinary methods of teaching, the common means of grace, the daily ritual of the Church, and the threadbare experience of the world. In the consuming light of a Divine revelation the hesitation of years vanishes. The doubts born of sceptical habits of thought, the critical perplexities, the generalizations which run counter to faith in the unseen, the cynical condemnations of enthusiasm, the proof-armour for the heart forged on the anvil of purely speculative science, the grotesque palliations which worldly custom has woven for indifference to the tremendous realities of life, are all alike consumed when the fire of God tries every man's work, and the eyes of men are opened by the Holy Ghost to the truth of things. No ecclesiastical institution however respectable, no organ of criticism however apparently logical and fair, no dogmatism however placid or self-complacent, can explain away the revelation that is made to the souls of men by the baptism of the Holy Spirit. When this great fire descends from heaven, it consumes the sacrifice laid on the



altar, and licks up the water that is in the trench, and the priests of Baal do not escape. The Elijah is ever standing on the threshold, and we know not how soon the mighty revelation may be made. Enthusiasm may indeed disturb the better judgment, a fear of the unknown and a sense of unfathomable danger may make cowards of brave men. It is true that sometimes under the spell of resistless fanaticism the real lessons of history or science may be disregarded, with grievous peril to the progress of society; that passionate appeals of infuriated zealots may rouse populations to frenzy; but I am not speaking of such things as these. They simply show what the mind of man is capable of, what reserves of unused, undeveloped, and volcanic power lie concealed behind the calm exterior of society; and they reveal moreover the region where the grace of God as well as the undisciplined passions of men may put forth mighty energy. But there is a genuine alliance of the soul of man with the unseen and eternal, and when the circuit which unites it with the infinite is completed, the tremendous and resistless force is liberated before which nothing can stand. There have been such moments in the history of humanity. They will probably recur.

Unfortunately, the one subject about which strong emotion is thought to be incompatible with common sense, concerning which enthusiasm is regarded as childish drivelling, and vehement opinion denounced as presumption, is that to which it is in reality more appropriate than to any other. In the politics of the senate and the municipality, in the arena of scientific research, in business and in love, boundless eagerness, consuming zeal, are applauded and defended; but if



men are in deep, dread earnest, about the reconciliation of their own disordered nature with the infinite Power that sways their destiny; if they are in eager search after the salvation which would not only cover their earthly life with love and beauty, but would fill with peace and hope the eternity to which they have found that they belong; then men whose eyes are shut on the eternities babble to them of the evil of enthusiasm. The normal activities of the Divine life within us ought, in respect of intensity of conviction, to resemble those experiences that many are too prone to slight as "revivals of religion." It is the great function of the Church to attain such a continuous fervour of spiritual worship, vision and service, as shall make its daily life and its constant influence on the world, akin to the phenomena of revival.

Now we may learn from John the Baptist something of the method of revival, of the law of deep impression, of the way in which the heavens are opened to human vision. His preaching was no hysterical shriek, no mystical appeal to fanatical passions. He stood firmly on the great moral order of the Divine government. He looked through the murky clouds that covered the political horizon, and saw the Lord seated on His throne. He prepared the way of the Lord by practical piety and moral earnestness. He revealed the inability of formal obedience or ceremonial purity to satisfy the craving of conscience; and he so turned the light of the old revelation upon the conscience, that he anticipated the stern sentence of the Master: "There is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust." This was not all: he promised deliverance from sin. He saw the twofold misery of



evil, its curse and its weakness. He discerned the *doom* of *sin* and the *corruption* of *nature*; and his prophetic glance anticipated both the redemption and the sanctification of man. His most persistent hope—and it was one that dominated all his teaching and deepened all his influence—was the coming of the Holy Spirit, the descent upon man of such a spiritual energy of thought and feeling, that all the current of regenerated life, all the dispositions of the newly-made man would spontaneously move in harmony with the will of God. The baptism of the Holy Spirit was the summation of John's highest hope for the true Israel. Whilst he gazed and pondered, whilst he waited for One who could impart the Divine life and transform the heart of man, he was brought into such relations with Jesus, that he knew Himself commissioned and impelled to cry, "Behold the Lamb of God!" Only He who had already by suffering, sacrifice, temptation, begun His redemptive work, only He who could and would take away the shame, the curse, and the peril of sin, could also baptize with the Holy Spirit.

The Son of the Father unveiled to John the heart of God. Because He was the Son of God, He became the sacrificial Lamb. Since He was thus dowered with energy and exalted in function, He also fulfilled in John's vision the sublime conception of the Bridegroom of the Bride whom He welcomed into the pavilion of His love. We must survey the whole career of the man if we wish to understand his unique relation to THE KINGDOM. It was the entirety of his teaching which constituted his ministry the beginning of "the great and notable day of the Lord."

We believe that now no deep effect will be produced



on the world by the ministers of the gospel, unless they too blend law with love, unless hope is built on righteousness, and conscience is satisfied with sacrifice, and sanctity accompanies salvation. The gospel that we preach must not hide from view either the Fatherhood or the Royalty of God. The dispensation of the Spirit must not be so expounded as to conceal or empty of all meaning the sublime fact that the Lamb is "in the midst of the throne."

The revival of the religious life will still involve the quickening of conscience, the preaching of righteousness, the insistence on practical duty; it will still assure the bewildered intellect and crushed and broken heart of the Father's righteous love. It will involve and enhance the truth that all the evil of sin from which it is impossible for man to escape, the Lord hath laid on One who is willing to bear it, and able to take it away; and those who have found out the ineradicable evil which clings to their nature, will also find that the great fountain of cleansing and the great source of power is put within the reach of a living faith.

The most powerful revivals of religion are those that begin with the Church. The disciples who heard John speak came into living fellowship with the Christ. They received into their life His body and blood, they heard His dying intercessions. They knew that He rose from the dead. He breathed on them the illumination and energy of the Holy Spirit, but even this did not fulfil all their hopes. From that hour to this, the hope of the Church has been the continual outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the flow of the river of life, clear as crystal, issuing from the throne of God and of the Lamb.



Let us then anticipate the speedy outburst of spiritual power, the higher revelations of the truth of the Person and the Spirit, the sacrifice and imperial glory, of the Lord Jesus. With this hope in us, may we not take up the mighty invocation of our own Milton, when he anticipated the day of revelation and revival and triumph?

“In that day it shall no more be said as in scorn, this or that was never held so till this present age, when men have better learnt that the times and seasons pass along under Thy feet, to go and come at Thy bidding; and as Thou didst dignify our fathers’ days with many revelations above all the foregoing ages, since Thou tookest the flesh, so Thou canst vouchsafe to us (though unworthy) as large a portion of thy Spirit as Thou pleasest; for who shall prejudice Thy all-governing will? seeing the power of Thy grace is not passed away with the primitive times, as fond and faithless men imagine, but Thy kingdom is now at hand, and Thou standing at the door. Come forth out of thy royal chambers, O Prince of all the kings of the earth! Put on the visible robes of Thy imperial majesty; take up that unlimited sceptre which thy almighty Father hath bequeathed Thee; for now the voice of Thy Bride calls Thee, and all creatures sigh to be renewed.”



## L'ENVOI.

THEN from the dawn it seem'd there came, but faint  
As from beyond the limit of the world,  
Like the last echo born of a great cry,  
Sounds, as if some fair city were one voice  
Around a king returning from his wars.

Thereat once more he moved about, and clomb  
E'en to the highest he could climb, and saw,  
Straining his eyes beneath an arch of hand,  
Or thought he saw, the speck that bare the king,  
Down that long water opening on the deep  
Somewhere far off, pass on and on, and go  
From less to less and vanish into light,  
AND THE NEW SUN ROSE, BRINGING THE NEW YEAR.

*Tennyson.*



## APPENDIX.







## APPENDIX A.

Pages 123, 406, and 412.

THE chronology of the life and ministry of John the Baptist is beset with all the difficulties which encumber the dates of the Nativity and Passion of our Lord. Nor can the duration of John's official career be determined without a previous settlement of the larger question of the length of our Lord's public ministry. Opinions have been much divided, and I do not presume to discuss their relative merits. A review of the chronological views of Keim would require a lengthened treatise, and much greater facility in dealing with the principles of chronological science than I possess. I will briefly indicate a few of the data upon which the whole question turns.

1. Taking the synoptic narrative as a trustworthy guide, it is clear that John must have been born before the death of Herod the Great.<sup>1</sup> The date of that event is accurately determined to be before the Passover of 750 A.U.C. On this Schürer, Lichtenstein, Browne, Ellicott, Wieseler, and Greswell, agree. The birth of our Lord could not be placed later than February, 750 A.U.C., nor that of John *later* than August, 749 A.U.C.

2. At the first Passover of our Lord's ministry<sup>2</sup> the Jews declared that the temple (*ἱεροδομήθη*) was built or in building forty and six years. The use of the *aorist* throws some uncertainty round the meaning of the expression, but we may reasonably compare this statement with that of Josephus,<sup>3</sup> that Herod commenced the rebuilding of the temple "when the eighteenth year of his reign had come."<sup>4</sup> Chronologists differ as to the mode of reckoning the years of Herod's reign, but there is strong probability that Herod's reign commenced in 716 A.U.C., that its eighteenth year was 734 A.U.C., and forty-six years would bring the date of the Passover, at which our Lord was (*ὥσκει*) about thirty years old,<sup>5</sup> to 780 A.U.C., and therefore the birth of John, six months earlier, would correspond with this conclusion, being "about" 749 A.U.C.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Luke i. 5-26; Matt. ii. 1.

<sup>2</sup> John ii. 20.

<sup>3</sup> *Antiq.* xv. 10. 3.

<sup>4</sup> See Browne, *Ordo Sæclorum*, p. 68, ff.

<sup>5</sup> Luke iii. 23.

<sup>6</sup> See the *Dissertations* of Greswell, vol. i. pp. 239-333.



3. The statement that John commenced his ministry in the fifteenth year of Tiberius,<sup>1</sup> is encumbered with serious difficulties on the above hypothesis. There can be little doubt that Augustus Cæsar died on 19th August, 767 A.U.C. Browne<sup>2</sup> maintains that this fifteenth year cannot be reckoned other than from the death of Augustus, and that the reign of Tiberius must date either from *August*, 767 A.U.C., or *Nisan* of that year; or if the *imperial* is identified with the *consular* year, either January, 767 or 768 (as the first of these years would embrace five, and the latter seven of the months of the first imperial year). The fifteenth year might be 783 A.U.C., and could not be earlier than 782 A.U.C. As we have seen that our Lord was born at the end of 749 or beginning of 750, this would afford a date in which He could scarcely be spoken of as *about* thirty years of age. Wieseler has argued that "the fifteenth year of Tiberius," with the other indications of date in Luke,<sup>3</sup> do not refer to the commencement, but to the close of the Baptist's ministry, which moreover he prolongs to the close of the ministry of our Lord.<sup>4</sup> He argues with great learning and candour that the note of time has reference to that great date at which the comprehensive ministry of our Lord in Galilee commenced, and he maintains that it comprised the year between 19th August, 781, to same date in 782, and that this date corresponds with all the other notes of time mentioned in Luke. This arrangement lengthens the ministry of John and shortens the period of his imprisonment. It involves the coincidence of our Lord's return to Galilee, given in synoptic narrative with that *implied* in John v. and vi., rather than that *described* in John iv. Browne (l. c.) goes still further, and considers that "the fifteenth year of Tiberius Cæsar" represents the one "acceptable year" of our Lord's ministry, as well as of John's, terminating at the Passover, 782 A.U.C., with the Passion of Jesus. On this hypothesis the various feasts of the fourth Gospel are the feasts of that *one* memorable year. He considers that the unnamed feast of chap. v. 1 is the feast of Pentecost; that the *Passover* referred to in John vi. 4 is an *interpolation*, mainly because it could not have been present in the MSS. used by Origen and other Fathers. If it had been, according to this writer, they would never have spoken of the ministry of our Lord as only lasting a single year. He argues that John vii. 2 represents the feast of *Tabernacles* in the month of September; that John x. 22 mentions the feast of *Dedication*, which occurred in December; and that the last Passover occurred in the March of the following year.

<sup>1</sup> Luke iii. 1, 2.<sup>2</sup> *Ordo Saeculorum*, p. 66.<sup>3</sup> Luke iii. 1, 2.<sup>4</sup> Wieseler, *A Chronological Synopsis of the Four Gospels*, translated by E. Venables. 1864. pp. 157-186. Cf. Ellicott's *Historical Lectures on the Life of our Lord*, p. 104, n.



This *schema* is subverted by the textual validity of John vi. 4. There is no indication of any deviation in the MS. authority for this verse, so that we do not feel justified in excluding it from the text, however interesting the resulting harmonies between the synoptic and Johannine Gospels might prove to be. The fact that the second Passover was not known to Origen, Irenæus, Clemens, or Tertullian, does not prove that the "text" was not in existence. The theory of Wieseler is far less difficult of acceptance although it is encumbered with the grave objection that our Lord, in John v. 33, refers to the ministry of John as a thing of the past. The tenour of this testimony to John implies the close of the ministry, if not the martyrdom of John.<sup>1</sup>

There is another hypothesis by which "the fifteenth year of Tiberius" may be shown to coincide with the first year of our Lord's ministry, without either curtailing the length of that ministry, prolonging that of John unduly, or abbreviating the imprisonment of John to a few weeks. It is one, however, which Wieseler and Browne condemn. Usher, Bengel, Pagi, Greswell, Lichtenstein, and other chronologists have maintained with various success the position that the fifteenth year of Tiberius must be reckoned from the date of Tiberius's being associated in the principate with Augustus, rather than from the death of the latter.<sup>2</sup> Velleius Paterculus, Suetonius, Dion Cassius, all refer to the decree of the senate, at the request of the emperor, that in the *provinces especially* Tiberius should be entrusted with supreme power. Greswell certainly makes it evident that there was a genuine co-principate of Tiberius and Augustus, which took effect before the middle of 765 A.U.C. Greswell refers to the statement of Eckhel that there is reason to believe in the existence of two coins of Antioch, which bear the date, 765-6, 766-7, and exhibit the head of Tiberius, with the title ΣΕΒΑΣΤΟΣ, and which if genuine would demonstrate the point. Browne<sup>3</sup> replies that the question does not turn upon the fact of the co-principate. but on the result of the inquiry "whether, after the death of Augustus, there exists any reckoning of the years of Tiberius from any other date than that." This, he says, has to be proved. If Luke used this computation, others would have done the same. Wieseler observes that no other writer, not even Josephus, adopts the method. Others have suggested that Luke might have reckoned the *regnal* years of the Roman princes from Nisan to Nisan, thus losing a year of actual time. If he made the first year of Tiberius to consist of seven months, from August, 767, to Nisan, 768, the fifteenth year might commence Nisan, 781.

<sup>1</sup> See Ellicott, *H. L.* p. 129.

<sup>2</sup> See Greswell, vol. i. *Diss.* viii. pp. 334-344.

<sup>3</sup> *L. c.* p. 67.



Wieseler rejects this as a shift which has no parallel. Ellicott doubtfully repudiates both methods of overcoming the difficulty.

Dr. Farrar, in his recent *Life of Christ*,<sup>1</sup> has however assented to the hypothetical computation of Greswell, and declares it to be "a method of computation which was likely to prevail in the provinces, and which certainly existed." So also does Archbishop Thomson, in Smith's *Dict. of Bible*,<sup>2</sup> who, reckoning the commencement of 765 A.U.C. as the first year of Tiberius, reckons 779 as the fifteenth, and therefore the date of the commencement of the ministry of John and inclusive of the baptism of Jesus.

I am disposed to think that this is the true solution of the problem. It is undoubtedly in harmony with the other notes of time furnished by Luke.

(a) It corresponds with the period during which Pontius Pilate was governor of Judæa. He was recalled from his post by Tiberius before the Passover, 789 A.U.C., having held his office ten years :<sup>3</sup> this would show that he had been installed in 779. Several special corroborations of this position are given by Greswell.<sup>4</sup>

(b) No difficulty is found in identifying the fifteenth year of Tiberius with the tetrarchate of Philip, who entered on his office in Nisan, 750 A.U.C., on the death of Herod, and died in twenty-third year of Tiberius, *i.e.*, before Nisan, 787.

(c) The same may be said of Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee, who was deposed in the autumn of 792, having, like Philip, entered on his dignity in the spring of 750, and therefore being one of the princes of Palestine during the whole period required.

(d) It is also stated that the appearance of John the Baptist was ἐπὶ ἀρχιερέως Ἄννα καὶ Καϊάφα, which is not without perplexity.

Annas was deposed from the high-priesthood by Valerius Gratus in 759, but was clearly possessed of great influence for many years, since his sons and son-in-law were successively appointed to the office. Caiaphas was elevated to the dignity in the year 770,<sup>5</sup> and was deposed from the office at nearly the same time as Pontius Pilate was dismissed, *viz.*, in 789. Some difficulty has been raised by the *association* of Annas and Caiaphas in the high-priestly office, but while the great influence and practical duties of the older man may be quite sufficient to account for the use of the phrase ἐπὶ ἀρχιερέως Ἄννα καὶ Καϊάφα, it is also desirable to remember that the word ἀρχιερεύς is used somewhat loosely to denote the *Nasi*, or president of the Sanhedrim, when he was also a priest.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the Sanhedrists generally were styled οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς, οἱ πρεσβύτεροι καὶ οἱ γραμματεῖς.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Vol. ii. p. 450.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. i. pp. 1041, 1074.

<sup>3</sup> *Antiq.* xviii. 4. 2, and *ibid.* 6. 5.

<sup>4</sup> *Diss.* ix.

<sup>5</sup> *Antiq.* xviii. 2.

<sup>6</sup> Acts. v. 21, 27 ; vii. 1 ; ix. 1, &c. See Wieseler, p. 171.

<sup>7</sup> Matt. xxvii. 1 ; Mark xv. 1 ; Luke xxii. 26.



(e) The singular addition of "Lysanias being tetrarch of Abilene" has occasioned much difficulty. It has arisen in the following way. Josephus<sup>1</sup> mentions a "Lysanias, the son of Ptolemy, the son of Mennœus, who made a league of friendship with Antigonus." In xiv. 7. 4, this same Ptolemy, the son of Mennœus, is spoken of as the ruler of Chalcis, under Mount Libanus. In Jewish Wars,<sup>2</sup> "Lysanias" is given as the name of the "son of Ptolemy." In *Antiq.* xv. 4. 1, Cleopatra, in her passion and cupidity, is represented as instigating Antony to get the dominion of Lysanias conveyed to her. This deed Antony accomplished by slaying Lysanias, the son of Ptolemy. Now Strauss maintains that this murdered Lysanias, governor of Chalcis, in the neighbourhood of Abila or Abilene, must be the governor of Abila also, and since he was put to death by Antony, 718 A.U.C., Luke must have made a gross blunder in his chronology. Strauss adds that "no other Lysanias is mentioned by Josephus, or any other writer of that age."<sup>3</sup> If that is true, Luke's note of time is very confusing and unhistorical. But Josephus, in *Antiq.* xix. 5. 1, when referring to events seventy-five years later on, and describing the extent of the dominion of Agrippa I., says of Claudius that "he restored to Agrippa, Judæa and Samaria, as due to his family; but for *Abila* of *Lysanias*, and all that lay at Mount Libanus, he bestowed them upon him as out of his own territories." In *Jewish Wars*, ii. 11. 5, he refers to the same circumstance, and calls it the *kingdom of Lysanias*, and adds that "Claudius bestowed on his (Agrippa's) brother Herod (who was his son-in-law, by marrying Berenice), the kingdom of Chalcis;" and once more: "Cæsar removed Agrippa from Chalcis into a greater kingdom, for he gave him the tetrarchy which had belonged to Philip, and he added to it the kingdom of Lysanias and that province which Varus had governed."<sup>4</sup> Now, nothing could be less probable than that Josephus should describe a district of country as the kingdom of Lysanias, if Lysanias had been dead for seventy-five years, and no other prince of the same name had taken his place. It becomes, then, highly probable that Josephus does refer to a second Lysanias in these several passages. This is made still more evident by *Antiq.* xx. 7. 1, where the transfer of Abila to Agrippa is spoken of; and it is expressly added that "this last had been the tetrarchy of Lysanias,"<sup>5</sup> and is distinguished from Chalcis, which, by the same act of imperial favour, was taken from Agrippa. We have seen above that it was given to Herod, his brother. These various references discriminate Chalcis from Abila, which latter, in more than one

<sup>1</sup> *Antiq.* xiv. 13. 3.

<sup>2</sup> *B. J.* i. 13. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Paulus, *Comm.*, endeavours to show that the tetrarchy of Philip included that of Lysanias.

<sup>4</sup> *B. J.* ii. 12. 8.

<sup>5</sup> See also *Antiq.* xviii. 6. 10.



place, is spoken of as a "*tetrarchy*." Josephus could not have referred to the Lysanias of Chalcis, who was murdered 34 B.C., as a "tetrarch," without gross inaccuracy; and he could not have suggested (as Strauss would have it) that CHALCIS is identical with ABILA, because he expressly states that *Chalcis* was taken from Agrippa, and *Abila*, the tetrarchy of Lysanias, was given him in exchange.<sup>1</sup> There are other references to this same dominion or house (*οἶκος*) of Lysanias as for awhile in the possession of Zenodorus.<sup>2</sup> At the death of Zenodorus, the country was wholly assigned to Herod. On Herod's death, Augustus gave to Philip a part of Zenodorus's possessions.<sup>3</sup> The probability is that the remainder were in the hands of a younger Lysanias. "In modern times a coin was found bearing the inscription *Λυσανίου τετραρχου και ἀρχιερέως*, and belongs to the period after Herod's death. Sestini *Lettere e Dissertazione numismatische*. Tom vi. p. 101, tab. 2." <sup>4</sup>

Wieseler concludes his argument with the words of Hug, who must be credited with the ingenious confirmation of Luke's statement: "We have another opportunity of proving that in the cases in which the endeavour has been made to convict Luke of a want of knowledge of facts, the honour, such as it is, belongs elsewhere." The note of time lies between 734-790, and is conformable with either interpretation of the date of "the fifteenth year of Tiberius Cæsar." All these notes of time are compatible with John being a little over thirty years of age in the year 779-780.

4. The grounds on which the date of Zacharias's service in the temple is supposed by Greswell and Wieseler to coincide with the same date for the birth of our Lord, have been recounted, *ante*, p. 76.

5. The astronomical calculations based upon the identification of the "Star in the East" with conjunctions of the great planets, in 747 and 748, though set forth with great learning by *Ideler*, and partially accepted by Greswell and Alford, are far from satisfactory, and are dismissed as data for the period of the visit to Jerusalem of "the wise men," or as chronological evidence of the true date of our Lord's birth.

6. The *baptism of Jesus* by John must have taken place during the fifteenth year of Tiberius Cæsar, and before the Passover of that year, and therefore the period of the year when this great central movement of John's ministry occurred is of importance. Greswell, as we have seen, makes this year to be from the beginning of 779-780, and Wieseler between 19th August, 781, and same date 782. All the other notes of time are compatible with

<sup>1</sup> Davidson, *Introd. N. T.* 1848. vol. i. 215, ff.; Ebrard, *Gospel History*, § 31; Wieseler, *Chron. Syn.* p. 174, ff. E.T. 159, ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Antiq.* xv. 10. 1; *B. J.* i. 20. 4.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* ii. 6. 3; *Antiq.* xvii. 11. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Davidson, *l.c.* i. 218; Wieseler, p. 167. De Saulcy, Renan, and Reichardt agree.



both hypotheses. But Wieseler, in order to bring this chronological conclusion into harmony with the other notes of time, which make Christ to have been born before 750 A.U.C., asks whether Luke does represent this celebrated date (according to him, 781-782) as that of the commencement or the close of the Baptist's ministry, and decides on the latter. He argues that Luke describes a *second* awakening of the Baptist, distinct from that mentioned in Matthew, and one immediately preceding his baptism of Jesus; that he goes on to mention his imprisonment, and gives the date of the imprisonment as that from which Christ's public ministry is to be reckoned. That imprisonment he supposes to have taken place in 782, and to be given by Luke at the outset of his account of the life of our Lord; but Wieseler holds that the indications given in Luke of the date of our Lord's baptism, when He was about thirty years old, compel us to suppose that it occurred in 780 A.U.C. Moreover, he agrees with Greswell in supposing that the portion of the ministry of John which preceded the baptism of Jesus lasted about six months, so that the whole difference in their reckoning of the "fifteenth year" of Tiberius Cæsar is referred to the period after the baptism and before the imprisonment. It is worthy of notice that the period of John's first ministry, between *Tisri*, 779 A.U.C., and *Tisri*, 780, was a Sabbatical year,<sup>1</sup> and this would have greatly contributed to the widely-spread impression produced by John's preaching. But the date of the imprisonment of John is made to coincide with the feast of Purim, which Wieseler identifies with the unnamed feast of John v. 1; and the journey to Galilee, mentioned by all the Synoptists after John's imprisonment, to have been about the feast of Purim, which in the year 782 occurred on 19th of March. The ministry of John on this understanding must have lasted two years after John's baptism of Jesus.

The conclusions of Wieseler on the chronological relations of this period are as follows :—

"The first public appearance of the Baptist (taking place in the wilderness of Judæa, probably in the autumn of 779 A.U.C.) and his later ministry.—Matt. iii. 1-12; Mark i. 1-8.

"Jesus, about thirty years old, is baptized by John in the Jordan, in the spring or summer of 780 A.U.C.—Luke iii. 21-23; Mark i. 9-11; Matt. iii. 13-17.

"Immediately afterwards our Lord's forty days' temptation in the wilderness (of Judæa).—Mark i. 12, 13; Luke iv. 1-13; Matt. iv. 1-11.

"Then a longer interval, from five to six months, in the life of our Lord, of which nothing is recorded.

"The testimony of the Baptist with regard to himself and his relation to Christ, before the messengers of the Sanhedrim (John

<sup>1</sup> See Wieseler, p. 186.



i. 19-27), most probably in February, but at latest at the beginning of March, 781 A.U.C. At this time John was baptizing in Bethany, in Peræa (John i. 28 ; cf. x. 40), which is not to be confounded with Bethany near Jerusalem.

"The next thirteen or fourteen days bring us to the arrival of Jesus in Capernaum in Galilee (John i. 29-ii. 12), where He tarried "not many days."

"Our Lord takes His journey to Jerusalem for the Passover (March 30), and tarries there and in Judæa till four months before the 15th of Nisan, *i. e.*, till December, 781 A.U.C. — John ii. 13-iii. 36.

"The return of our Lord through Samaria, occupying about seven days (John iv. 1-44), and His residence of two or three months in Galilee.—Ver. 45-54.

"Our Lord's journey to Jerusalem for the feast of Purim, *i. e.*, the 14th of Veadar = March 10th, 782 A.U.C., and His hasty retreat to Galilee after the imprisonment of the Baptist.—John. v. 1-47.

"Between this journey of our Lord through Samaria, in December, 781 A.U.C., and His return to Galilee, immediately after the feast of Purim, and the imprisonment of the Baptist, subsequently to the middle of March, 782 A.U.C., must be placed the narrative (Luke iii, 1-20) which closes with the Baptist's imprisonment.

"It follows then that from our Lord's baptism by John, up to His return to Galilee, after the feast of Purim, and the imprisonment of the Baptist, subsequently to the middle of March, 782 A.U.C., there was an interval of a year and a half, or a year and three quarters, of which only the latter portion, of about a year's duration, is described in any detail, and that by John. Our Lord's Judæan ministry preponderated during this period, for He tarried there some nine or ten months : on the other hand, that in Galilee was subordinate, His sojourn only lasting two or three months." <sup>1</sup>

The advantages of this arrangement are that it becomes easier to harmonise the statements of the Synoptists with that of John, but it leaves long spaces in the first two years of our Lord's ministry, of which we have scarcely any traces whatever. It supposes moreover, that during the whole of this interval John must have continued his ministry, and though he and Jesus were in near proximity, they avoided all personal intercourse. Such a discovery makes the message from the prison, in some of its aspects, the expression of a more formidable doubt, and more out of harmony with the great testimony recorded in John iii. It moreover greatly aggravates this difficulty by reducing the length of John's imprisonment to a very brief sojourn of three weeks in Machærus.

<sup>1</sup> Wieseler, *Chron. Syn. E.T.* p. 232.



This, however, is complicated by another class of considerations arising out of—

7. The date of the marriage of Herodias with Antipas. The *date* of the imprisonment and death of John has been supposed to be associated by Josephus with the disaster which befel the army of Herod. Now, as this happened shortly before the death of Tiberius, 790, Keim, Holtzmann, and others have gone so far as to shift the whole chronology in virtue of this reference. Wieseler has, I think, shown conclusively that all that can be definitely inferred from the statement of Josephus is that the intercourse between Herodias and Antipas took place before the outbreak of the war between Aretas and Herod, in 789. If we can discover the precise date of this intimacy, and the consummation of the marriage, the date of the imprisonment and death of the Baptist may be determined. Now Wieseler and Greswell differ in every particular in their method of solving this problem. Wieseler follows Sol. van Til and Anger in his solution. (1) He shows by a variety of considerations, based on the date of the return of Agrippa I. from Rome to Palestine, and his residence in Tiberias, that the marriage must have taken place before 784 A.U.C., as it was expressly referred to by Josephus in connection with that event. (2) He makes use of the reference in Josephus<sup>1</sup> to the fact that it was on a journey of Antipas to Rome, on his private affairs, that he visited Herod (*Mariamne* or *Philip*), fell in love with his wife, and agreed to marry her on his return. (3) The next step is to discover the occasion of this visit to Rome, and Wieseler accepts the ingenious argument of Van Til that this occasion occurred after the death of the Empress Livia, for Herod had built the city *Julias* in her honour, and was anxious to secure some portion of the empress's bequest of territory in his own neighbourhood. This Wieseler seems to think included Machærus, which must at this time have passed from the hands of Aretas to Herod. With this view Schürer agrees. Now Livia died in 782, and the visit to Rome, if then made, must have been made hurriedly, for Herod to have returned to Galilee before the feast of Purim, in March, 782. This, however, is the supposition. It seems to me that Greswell shows quite as strong a probability for this visit of Antipas having been paid two years earlier, at the moment when, by a series of calculations, he makes it probable that Antipas had completed the erection of his splendid city *Tiberias*, in honour of the emperor, in the year 780 A.U.C. He conjectures that the marriage had been proposed and the betrothal arranged in the spring, and that before it was consummated John had said, "It is not lawful for thee to have the wife of thy brother," thus rousing the indignation of Herodias by the effect he produced

<sup>1</sup> *Antiq.* xviii. 5. 1.



for a while upon the mind of her intended husband ; and that the chronological arrangement is as follows:—

A.U.C. 780 (Spring).—Herod fell in love with Herodias, was rebuked by the Baptist, imprisoned him in Machærus, and afterwards proceeded to Rome.

A.U.C. 781 (Spring).—He returned from Rome, and about feast of Tabernacles put John to death in Machærus.

Greswell supposes that Machærus after this fell into the hands of Aretas, and that the daughter of Aretas fled to it ; and it was not until a year after this that the marriage was consummated.

Keim (l. c. iii. pp. 489–502) places the death of John 787 A.U.C., in consequence of his view of the reference of Josephus to the event in connection with the defeat of Herod's army ; and with him Holtzmann, Hausrath, Savin, Schenkel, and virtually Hitzig, agree.

The dates of the imprisonment and death seem to me far more probable than those advocated by Wieseler. The chief difficulty is the statement of Josephus that the daughter of Aretas fled to Machærus, "then in her father's possession." If the death of John took place before the marriage, the fortress must have passed again immediately into the hands of Herod from this temporary occupation by Aretas ; and we have seen in Lecture vii. that it was not improbable that Herod and Herodias desired the sight of the prize and pledge of their illicit love. This arrangement cuts abruptly short the ministry of the Baptist in 780, before our Lord's journey through Samaria, *i.e.*, four or five months before the harvest of 781, and suggests that the Baptist lingered in prison till the γενέσια of Antipas, in 781 or 782, till the annual festival of his accession, on that occasion held in Machærus. If this festival corresponded with the date of the death of Herod the Great, it would be held about the time of the Passover. It is moreover clear that the news of John's death reached Jesus not long after the Passover alluded to in John vi. 4. The imprisonment, on this calculation, must have lasted about four months, or a year and four months, according as we take one other element into consideration. That element is the question whether the unnamed feast in John v. 1 be another Passover or the Purim feast preceding the Passover of John by a few weeks.<sup>1</sup> Some of the latest critical editors preserve the definite article before ἑορτή, though this does not settle the question.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Wieseler, Ellicott, Greswell, Hengstenberg, *Comm.* John v. 1.

<sup>2</sup> See Tisch. 8th Ed. Tregelles omits it.



COMPARATIVE CHRONOLOGY OF THE PRINCIPAL EVENTS REFERRED TO.

EVENT.	<sup>1</sup> Usher. A.U.C.	<sup>2</sup> Greswell. A.U.C.	<sup>3</sup> Wieseler. A.U.C.	<sup>4</sup> Hales. A.U.C.	<sup>5</sup> Winer. A.U.C.	<sup>6</sup> Schröder. A.U.C.	<sup>7</sup> Lichtenstein. A.U.C.	<sup>8</sup> Holtzmann. <sup>9</sup> Hitzig. <sup>10</sup> Keim. A.U.C.	<sup>11</sup> Browne. A.U.C.	<sup>12</sup> Horne A.U.C.
Herod proclaimed King by Senate	...	...	...	...	714	...	...	714	714	
Accession of Herod the Great ...	...	717	717	717	...	717	717	...	717	
Commencement of Rebuilding the Temple.....	...	734	734	...	733	734	...	734	734	734
Birth of John the Baptist .....	747	749 Summer	749	748	746	...	748 Dec.	...	748	749
Birth of Jesus Christ .....	748	750	750	748	747	...	749	751-2	749-50	750
Death of Herod the Great .....	750	750	750	...	750	750	750	750	750	750
Principate of Tiberius .....	765	765	...	766	...	...	765	...	...	...
Death of Augustus.....	767	767	767	...	767	767	767	767	767	...
"Fifteenth year of Tiberius." Ap- pearance of John .....	779	779-80	781-2	779	781	781-2	779-80	781-2	781	...
Baptism of Jesus .....	780	780	780 Summer	780	782	...	779-80	786-7	781	780
First Passover.....	...	780	781	781	...	780-1	780	...	781	780
Imprisonment of John .....	783	780 Spring	782 March	781	782	...	781	787	781	781
Marriage of Antipas and Herodias	...	782	782	...	Before 785	782	...	786-7	...	...
Death of John.....	783	781	782	782	783	782	782	787	782	784
Death of Christ .....	786	784	783	784	784	783	783	788	782	786
Deposition of Pontius Pilate .....	...	789	...	...	789	...	...	788-9	789-90	...
Defeat of Herod's Army .....	...	789	789	...	789	789	...	789	...	...
Death of Tiberius .....	...	790	790	...	790	...	...	...	790	...
Exile of Herod Antipas.....	...	793	...	...	792	792	...	792	792	...

1 A. V. Cambridge Ed. by Scrivener, 1870-2. 2 *Dissertations on the Gospels*, vol. i. and iii. 3 *Chronological Synopsis of the Four Gospels*. Trans. by Venables.  
4 *Analysis of Chronology*, vol. i. ii. 5 *Biblisches Real-Wörterbuch*. 6 *Lehrbuch der Neutestamentlichen Zeitgeschichte*. 1874. 7 *Lebensgeschichte des Herrn I. C.*  
and Herzog. *Ency.* vol. vi. 592. 8 *Judenthum und Christenthum im Zeitalter der Apocryphischen und Neutestamentlichen Literatur*. 1867. 9 *Geschichte des*  
*Volkes*, vol. ii. 10 *Geschichte Jesus von Nazara*, bd. i. 11 *Ordo Saeculorum*. 12 *Introduction to the Bible*, edited by Horne, Tregelles, and Davidson, vol. ii.



## APPENDIX B.

## BAPTISMAL RITES PRACTISED BY HINDUS.

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BATHING accompanies solemn investiture into various degrees of Buddhist sanctity. See account of the commencement of the novitiate, Köppen, *Die Religion des Buddha*, vol. i. p. 333.

The sacramental cleansings of the Hindus are thus described and summarized by Wüttke, *Geschichte des Heidenthums*, ii. 378 :—  
 “Die Reinigungen bei allen religiösen Handlungen sind in den Gesetz-büchern sehr genau vorgeschrieben. Bei der Geburt, dem Zahnen und dem Tode eines Kindes, so wie der Aufnahme desselben in die Kaste müssen seine Verwandten solche Reinigungen vornehmen, . . . Das Hauptmittel der Reinigung ist meist Waschen und Baden; heilige Terche (Tirtha) sind zu diesen Zwecken zahlreich angelegt, am höchsten gilt das Baden in dem heiligen GANGES; oder man nimmt Wasser in der Mund. . . .”

The following interesting account of the habits and religious customs of the Vaishnava Brahmins has been furnished to me by a missionary of long standing, Rev. G. Oliver Newport, of Nagercoil, and it may throw some light upon the wide diffusion of the baptismal rite. There is much in the account which, if the native informant can be trusted, reveals the influence of Christian example and theory.

“The Vaishnava Brahmins (*i. e.*, worshippers of Vishnu) have a peculiar ceremony, called Saranâkathi (lit., Refuge, or Blissful Security). They say that this corresponds to the Christian rite of baptism. It takes place but once in a lifetime, and all who have undergone that ceremony are said to have undergone the ‘new birth.’ Apart from this ceremony, there is no heaven for them. The assuming of the Pûnûl, or Sacred Thread of the Brahmin, is in no way connected with this ceremony. *That* assumption takes place at about the age of seven, and in the case of boys only.

“Formerly this ceremony of Saranâkathi did not take place till the intending recipient had reached the age of thirty years, but now all who have attained the age of sixteen, or thereabouts, are eligible for the rite. Children also, under special circumstances, have this ceremony performed upon them; and, indeed, every living thing (especially a cow) in the Brahmin’s house must be thus baptized when *in articulo mortis*. The formula used at the baptism of a dying cow or other animal is a very brief one, and amounts to merely a prayer to the deity to accept the life thus passing away.

“The person desiring this rite must apply to the Guru (high-priest), who subjects the applicant to a kind of probation for a few



months, in order to be thoroughly satisfied with his conduct, after which the ceremony may take place in any of the following ways.

“1. The applicant visits the sacred tank, or river, where such ablutions are performed, and bathes himself (*i. e.*, he stands in the water up to his thighs, and closing his mouth and nostrils, dips himself frequently under the water), repeating, as he does so, the Mantra, or sacred invocation specially appointed for that purpose. He then visits the temple, and standing in front of the deity there, he makes confession of his sins, appeals for pardon, and promises amendment of life, very much in the following manner :—‘ O great and holy god ! I have broken thy laws, and committed many sins. I am indeed a sinner. If thou shouldest deal with me according to my sins, I should be utterly undone. But oh, deal not thus with me ! Have mercy upon me ! Forgive my sin ! Teach me thy way, and I will hereafter walk therein ! From this time I forsake all my former life. From this time I live altogether anew. I will obey thy commandments most minutely, whatever they may be. Forgive my past sins ! Accept the offerings which I now present ! Here, at thy shrine, in thy temple, I vow, I swear, that my future life shall be holy, in accordance with thy will !’ He then returns home, ‘born again,’ ‘a new creature.’ His bathing has made ‘old things pass away ;’ his confession and vow in the temple have made ‘all things new.’

“2. The applicant bathes exactly as described above, and visits the temple afterwards. But instead of making his own confession of sin, &c., he submits himself to the high-priest, who, *in his name*, makes to the deity the necessary confession of sin, vows of reformation, &c., the applicant standing at the shrine and repeating, after the high-priest, word for word, all that the high-priest says, from beginning to end.

“3. The applicant being ill, or old, or disabled, and consequently unable personally to bathe in the tank and visit the temple, sends word to the high-priest of his intention and of his hindrances. In return, the high-priest supplies him with a vessel of water from the sacred place, with which he bathes himself. In his own room, or wherever he may be, he takes this water, handful by handful, and throws or sprinkles it over himself, while he repeats the very same Mantra that he would have to repeat if he bathed in the proper place. After this, the high-priest in the temple, in the name of, and on behalf of, the absent candidate, goes through the same confession of sin, &c., that the man himself would have to make ; the result being the same as in No. 1 and No. 2.

“In whichever of these three ways the ceremony is performed, it involves profuse offerings of flowers, rice, cocoanuts, sweetmeats, &c., to the god, fees to the temple, fees to the high-priest, and a



feast to all the families of that particular caste or clan resident in that village. From the time that ceremony is performed, the recipient is bound by higher and more stringent rules of conduct than before ; and if he fail to act accordingly, he is not only liable to be reproached by his companions and friends, but also to be censured and made to do penance by the high-priest.

“ Males and females equally receive this baptism and new birth, but females are not allowed to repeat the form of confession, &c., after the high-priest in the temple. They must simply stand before the deity, and listen to the high-priest repeating the Sanscrit formula, which they cannot, of course, understand ; after which he tells them, in the vernacular, the meaning of what he has uttered in their name. The Mantra which females repeat during the preliminary ablutions also is a much shorter form than that used by males. These forms are all in Sanscrit, and are never altered or varied—a liturgy, in fact, which must never be departed from.

“ In the case of moribund children, the high-priest (Guru) need not be present, nor even the ordinary officiating priest of the temple ; but in such an emergency, the most learned man amongst them, the one most conversant with the Vedas and Shastras, is perfectly competent to do all that is necessary. In such a case water is procured from the sacred tank, well, or river, as the case may be, and the child is sprinkled by the person officiating, who repeats *for the child*, and *in its name*, the Mantra, which of course the dying child cannot repeat for itself. The sprinkling must go on, with little or no intermission, during the repetition of the Mantra, and at certain important points (where the bathing adult would dip himself) an extra quantity of water is sprinkled by way of special emphasis.

“ If such a child should recover from its illness, the ceremony is never repeated.

“ Infants are sinful, because of the sins they committed in their former life. If they had not committed sins, they would not be born into this world at all. Therefore, if this ceremony of Saranâkathi is not performed, these sins are not washed away, and consequently the infants go into an inferior and degraded existence. Hence the necessity of the ceremony. If the baptismal part of the ceremony should be completed, but the child die before the subsequent service in the temple be completed, all that has been done counts for nothing. The child is ‘yet in its sins.’

“ The *heaven* of Vaishnavas is the end of births, or liberation from the bondage of transmigration, by being absorbed into the deity. No heaven for the unbaptized, in their case, means no present absorption at the end of this life, but another round of births and



existences. The service in the temple, after the baptism of children, is exactly the same as in No. 3, mentioned above.

“ My authority for the above is Sesha Iyengar, a priest (not a high-priest, or Guru, who is always an ascetic) of the Vaishnava Brahmins, who is now residing at Nagercoil.

“ G. O. NEWPORT,

“ *Missionary of Lond. Miss. Soc.*

“ Nagercoil, March 2, 1874.”

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## APPENDIX C.

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### THE ESTIMATE FORMED BY HIPPOLYTUS OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BAPTISM OF JESUS.

“ WHEREFORE John, the forerunner of the Lord, who knew not this mystery (before), on learning that He is Lord in truth, cried out and spake to those who were to be baptized of him, ‘ O generation of vipers, why look ye so earnestly at me? I am not the Christ, I am the servant, and not the Lord ; I am the subject, and not the king ; I am the sheep, and not the shepherd ; I am a man, and not God. By my birth I loosed the barrenness of my mother. I did not make virginity barren. I was brought up from beneath ; I did not come down from above. I bound the tongue of my father ; I did not unfold Divine grace. I was known by my mother, and I was not announced by a star. I am worthless and the least ; but after me there comes One who is before me ; after me, indeed, in time, but before me, by reason of the inaccessible and unutterable light of Divinity. There comes One mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear. He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire. I am subject to authority, but He has authority in Himself. I am bound by sins, but He is the Remover of sins. I apply (παράπρω) the law, but He bringeth grace to light. I teach as a slave, but He judgeth as the Master. I have the earth as my couch, but He possesses heaven. I baptize with the baptism of repentance, but He confers the gift of adoption. He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire. Why give ye attention to me? I am not the Christ.’

“ 4. As John says these things to the multitude, and as the people watch in eager expectation of seeing some strange spectacle with their bodily eyes, and the devil is struck with amazement at such a testimony from John, lo, the Lord appears, plain, solitary, uncovered (γυμνός), without escort (ἀποστύρευτος), having on Him the body of man like a garment, and hiding the dignity of the Divinity, that He may elude the snares of the dragon. And not



only did He approach John as Lord without royal retinue, but even like a mere man, and one involved in sin, He bent His head to be baptized by John. Wherefore John, on seeing so great a humbling of Himself, was struck with astonishment at the affair, and began to prevent Him, saying, as ye have just heard, 'I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me? What doest Thou, O Lord? Thou teachest things not according to rule. I have preached one thing (regarding Thee), and Thou performest another. The devil has heard one thing, and perceives another. Baptize me with the fire of Divinity; why waitest Thou for water? Enlighten me with the Spirit; why dost Thou attend upon a creature? Baptize me, the Baptist, that Thy pre-eminence may be known. I, O Lord, baptize with the baptism of repentance, and I cannot baptize those who come to me unless they first confess fully their sins. Be it so then that I baptize Thee. What hast Thou to confess? Thou art the Remover of sins, and wilt Thou be baptized with the baptism of repentance? Though I should venture to baptize Thee, the Jordan dares not to come near Thee. I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me?'

"5. And what saith the Lord to him? 'Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Suffer it to be so now, John; thou art not wiser than I. Thou seest as man; I foreknow as God. It becomes me to do this first, and thus to teach. I engage in nothing unbecoming, for I am invested with honour. Dost thou marvel, O John, that I am not come in my dignity? The purple robe of kings suits not one in private station, but military splendour suits a king. Am I come to a prince, and not to a friend? Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. I am the Fulfiller of the law; I seek to leave nothing wanting to its whole fulfilment, that so after me Paul may exclaim, Christ is the fulfilling of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Baptize me, John, in order that no one may despise baptism. I am baptized by thee, the servant, that no one among kings or dignitaries may scorn to be baptized by the hand of a poor priest. Suffer me to go down into the Jordan, in order that they may hear my Father's testimony, and recognize the power of the Son.' Then, at length, John suffers Him. And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water, and the heavens were opened unto Him; and lo, the Spirit of God descended like a dove, and rested upon Him. And a voice (came) from heaven, saying, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'"



## APPENDIX D.

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THE TRUTH OF SUPPOSED LEGENDS AND FABLES. BY CARDINAL  
WISEMAN.

“SUFFICE it to say that, according to travellers, there are three heads of St. John. Now, as I have said, a body can be divided, but you can hardly imagine this to be the case with a head. I will read you an extract, then, from Sir John Mandeville :—

“‘From thence we go up to Samaria, which is now called Sebaste: it is the chief city of that country. There was wont to be the head of St. John the Baptist enclosed in the wall, but the Emperor Theodosius had it drawn out, and found it wrapped in a little cloth, all bloody, and so he carried it to Constantinople, and the hinder part of the head is still at Constantinople ; and the fore part of the head, to under the chin, under the Church of St. Silvester, where are nuns, and it is yet all broiled, as though it were half burnt ; for the Emperor Julian, above mentioned, of his wickedness and malice, burned that part with the other bones, as may still be seen ; and this’ thing hath been proved both by popes and emperors. And the jaws beneath which hold to the chin, and a part of the ashes, and the platter on which the head was laid when it was smitten off, are at Genoa ; and the Genoese make a great feast in honour of it, and so do the Saracens also. And some men say that the head of St. John is at Amiens, in Picardy ; and other men say that it is the head of St. John the bishop. I know not which is correct, but God knows : but however men worship it, the blessed St. John is satisfied.’

“This is a true Catholic sentiment. Right or wrong, all mean to honour St. John, and there is an end of it. We could not expect a traveller going through the country like Sir John, not visiting every place, but hearing one thing from one and another from another, to tell us the exact full truth. But we have here two very important points gained. First, we have the singular fact of the division of the head at all. We occasionally hear of the head of a saint being at a particular place, but seldom of a part of a head being in one place and a part in another. Here we have an unprejudiced traveller going into the East. He comes to the place where the head of St. John used to be kept, and he finds there the tradition that it was divided into three parts, one of which was at Constantinople, one at Genoa, and another at Rome. Then he adds, ‘Other people say that the head is at Amiens.’ So much Sir John Mandeville further informs us. He mentions the places where it was reported the head was, telling us that it was divided into



three. This is a statement worthy of being verified. It was made a long time ago, and yet the traditions remain the same. It was as well believed in the thirteenth century in the East, at Sebaste, as it is in Europe at the present moment. The church of St. Silvester in Capite, which many of you remember, is a small church on the east side of the Corso, entered by a sort of vestibule : it has an atrium or court, with arches round, and dwellings for the chaplains. The outer gates can be shut at night, so as to prevent completely any access to the church. The rest is an immense building belonging to the nuns, running out towards the Propaganda. When the Republicans in the late invasion got hold of Rome, the first thing, of course, which they did, was to turn out the monks and nuns right and left, to make barracks ; and the poor nuns of St. Silvester were ordered to move. The head of St. John is in a shrine which looks very brilliant, but is poor in reality. I think it is exposed high beyond the altar, and the nuns kept it in jealous custody in their house. The Republicans sent away the nuns in the middle of the night, at ten or eleven o'clock, just as they were, with what clothes they could get made into bundles : there were carriages at the door to send them off to some other convent, without the slightest warning or notice. The poor creatures were ordered to take up their abode in the convent of St. Pudentiana. The only thing they thought of was their relic, and that they carried with them. The good nuns received them, though late at night, and did what they could to give them good cheer : they gave up one of their dormitories to them, putting themselves to immense inconvenience.

“When the French came to Rome, they found St. Silvester so useful a building for public purposes, that they continued to hold it, but permitted the nuns to occupy some rooms near the church. I was in Rome while they were still at my titular church, and went to visit the nuns attached to it. Their guests asked, ‘Would you not like to see our relic of St. John?’ I said, ‘Certainly I should ; perhaps I shall never have another opportunity.’ I do not suppose it had been out of their house for hundreds of years. There is a chapel within the convent which the nuns of St. Pudentiana consider a sacred oratory, having a miraculous picture there, to which they are much attached, and in this they kept the shrine. On examination, I found that there was no part of the head except the back. It is said in the extract I have read to you that the front part of the head is at Rome, but it is the back of the skull merely ; the rest is filled up with some stuffing, and silk over it. The nuns have but a third of the head ; and the assertion that they pretend to possess the head, which travellers make, is clearly false. I can say, from my own ocular inspection, that it is but the third part—



the back part—which is the most interesting, because there the stroke of martyrdom fell. I was certainly glad of this fortunate opportunity of verifying the relic. Some time afterwards I was at Amiens. I was very intimate with the late bishop, and spent some days with him. One day he said to me, ‘Would you wish to see our head of St. John?’ ‘Yes,’ I replied, ‘I should much desire it.’ ‘Well,’ he said, ‘we will wait till the afternoon ; then I will have the gates of the cathedral closed, that we may examine it at leisure.’ We dined early, and went into the chapel of the Blessed Sacrament, where the relic was exposed, with candles. After saying prayers, it was brought, and I had it in my hands. It was nothing but the mask, the middle and back portions being totally wanting. You could almost trace the expression and character of the countenance in the bony structure. It was of the same size and colour as the portion which I had seen at St. Pudentiana ; but the remarkable thing about it is, that there are stiletto marks in the face. We are told by Fathers that Herodias stabbed the head with a bodkin when she got it into her hand, and here are the marks of such an operation visible. You could almost say that you had seen him as he was alive. I have not seen the third fragment, but I can hardly doubt that it is a portion of the same head, and that it would comprise the parts, the chin and the jaw, because there is no lower jaw in the front part, which is a mere mask. The only other claimant is Genoa, and its relic I have not seen. But this is exactly the portion allotted by Mandeville to that city. I have, however, had the satisfaction of personally verifying two of the relics, each of which comprises a third part of the head, leaving for the other remainder exactly the place which our old traveller allots to it.”—From *Essays on Religion and Literature*. By Various Writers. Edited by H. E. Manning, D.D.

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## APPENDIX E.

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### TINTORET'S PICTURE OF THE BAPTISM OF JESUS.

“TINTORET has thrown into this picture his utmost strength, and it becomes noble in his hands by his most singularly imaginative expression, not only of the immediate fact, but of the whole train of thought of which it is suggestive ; and by his considering the Baptism not only as the submission of Christ to the fulfilment of all righteousness, but as the opening of the earthly struggle with the prince of the powers of the air, which, instantly beginning in the temptation, ended only on the cross.



“ The river flows fiercely under the shadow of a great rock. From its opposite shore, thickets of close gloomy foliage rise against the rolling chasm of heaven, through which breaks the brightness of the descending Spirit. Across these, dividing them asunder, is stretched a horizontal floor of flaky cloud, on which stand the hosts of heaven. Christ kneels upon the water, and does not sink. The figure of St. John is indistinct, but close beside his raised right arm there is a spectre in the black shade ; the Fiend, harpy-shaped, hardly seen, glares down upon Christ with eyes of fire, waiting his time. Beneath this figure, there comes out of the mist a dark hand, the arm unseen, extended to a net in the river, the spars of which are in the shape of a cross. Behind this, the roots and under stems of the trees are cut away by the cloud, and beneath it and through them is seen a vision of wild, melancholy, boundless light, the sweep of the desert ; and the figure of Christ is seen therein alone, with His arms lifted as in supplication or ecstasy, borne of the Spirit into the Wilderness to be tempted of the Devil. There are many circumstances which combine to give to this noble work a more than usually imaginative character. The symbolical use of the net, which is the cross net still used constantly in the canals of Venice, and common throughout Italy, is of the same character as that of the carpenter’s tools in the Annunciation ; but the introduction of the spectral figure is of bolder reach, and yet more that vision of the after-temptation which is expressly indicated as a subject of thought rather than of sight, because it is in a part of the scene which in *fact* must have been occupied by the trunks of the trees whose tops are seen above. And another circumstance completes the mystic character of the whole, that the flaky clouds which support the angelic hosts, take, on the right, where the light first falls upon them, the shape of the head of a fish, the well-known type both of the baptismal sacrament and of Christ.”—Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, vol. ii. 170.







